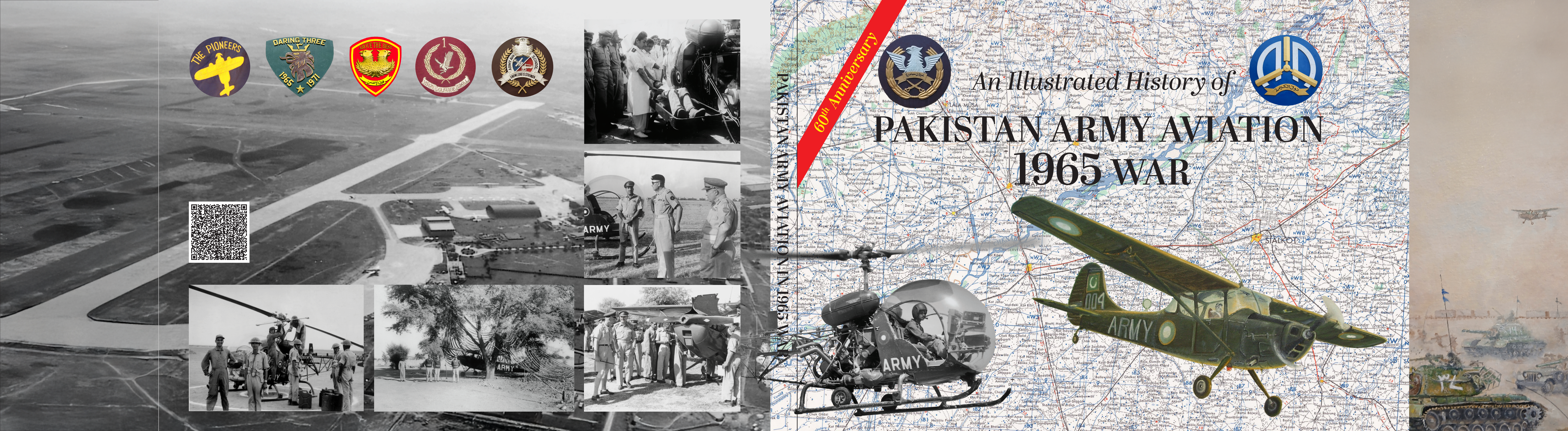




60th Anniversary



An Illustrated History of

PAKISTAN ARMY AVIATION 1965 WAR



An Illustrated History of
Pakistan Army Aviation



in 1965 War



Newly inducted L-19 and OH-13S at Lahore





Formation of 2 Squadron's L-19s overhead Lahore Airfield 1956

Abbreviations

ADC:	Aide de Camp.
A.G.R.A:	Army Group Royal Artillery, a grouping of artillery regiments that include field, medium and heavy regiments.
A.O.P:	Air Observation Post, a light unarmed aircraft flown exclusively by the Royal Artillery Officers.
A.L.G:	Advance Landing Ground selected close to the forward defence line.
ATC:	Air Traffic Control.
AIMH:	Army Institute of Military History.
Battery:	Sub section of an artillery regiment, 2-3 troops form a battery commanded by a major, it normally have 12 guns.
Brig:	Brigadier.
C-in-C:	Commander In Chief.
CO:	Commanding Officer.
Col:	Colonel.
Capt:	Captain.
EME:	Electrical Mechanical Engineers.
F.O.O:	Forward observer officer, an artillery officer who is attached with the infantry battalion to carry out observed fire.
F.O.P:	Flying Observation Post it was later changed into Air Observation Post.
Indirect Fire:	Artillery fire in which guns rely upon the maps for firing.
GOC:	General officer Commanding, a major general.
GHQ:	General Headquarters.
I.A.F:	Indian Air Force.
Lt Col:	Lieutenant Colonel.
Lt Gen:	Lieutenant General.
Maj:	Major.
O.P:	Observation Post.
O.R:	All ranks other than Officers, Warrant Officers & Non Commissioned Officers.
PAF:	Pakistan Air Force.
QFI:	Qualified Flying Instructor.

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Pakistan Army Aviation - from Legacy to Destiny



Foreword

General Officer Commanding Army Aviation



Maj Gen Muhammad Saeed Anwar Khan

Military history is not merely a chronology of events – it is rather the memory of men in arms who gave their blood and sweat for the glory of the nation. In its pages lie the struggles and triumphs, the follies and wisdom, and the stories that have bent and reshaped the frontiers in our chequered history. This book is a journey through those memories, carefully compiled to illuminate not only what happened, but why it mattered – and why it still does.

This year (2025) we celebrate the 60th anniversary of 1965 War with India which was a watershed event in the history of Pakistan and its Armed Forces. The newly born state was able to challenge the bigger rival: India, to successfully counter the hegemon of the subcontinent through a fine blend of diplomacy, strategic planning, deception and above all determination of the entire nation. Our soldiers, airmen and sailors fought bravely against a bigger adversary.

Pakistan Army despite sharing same lineage as of Indian Army had one remarkable tactical advantage over the foe, by virtue of its Air Arm comprising sixty odd Bird Dogs (L-19), eighteen Bubble (OH-13) helicopters in addition to one twin engine Beechcraft. These aircraft were all unarmed but the contribution made by these assets was of immense value in the shape of intelligence collection and its timely dissemination to the field formations. Other types of employment included casualty evacuation even in the midst of fire, and allowing commanders to visit the front line and watch the battles from the third dimension. Indians on the other hand were still following World War era doctrine of having all that could fly in the air under their air force. As we follow the epic year, this advantage becomes more pronounced, in certain cases even becoming battle winning factor.

The chapters ahead are a result of diligent research, thoughtful interpretation and deep insight by Major General (retired) Muhammad Azam Ex-GOC Army Aviation (2001-2004) and Major (retired) Aamir Cheema. My special gratitude to these officers for their valuable contribution in collection and compilation of data to give it a worthy shape. I am sure that this publication will be a great help to the younger generations in comprehending the magnificent role played by Army Aviation during the conflict spread over a year.

Pakistan Army Zindabad, Pakistan Paindabad.

Introduction

Pakistan Army inherited four Auster aircraft (No.1 Air Observation Flight) on independence, these aircraft were meant for aerial artillery shoots and communication missions. Flight was employed for reconnaissance during mass transfer of population in August 1947. Pilots were initially trained at UK and later at Chaklala airfield at Rawalpindi. Flight moved to Dhamial in 1952. Till 1958 all pilots were from Regiment of Artillery , however after raising of Aviation School, officers from all arms were allowed to appear for aptitude test in Army Aviation. To be able to earn his flying brevet an officer had to undergo 200 flying hours course spread over eight months. From the fixed wing pilots , officers were selected to undergo rotary conversion. Pilots were not permanently posted in army aviation rather after few years of flying service they would revert back to their parent regiments. In 1976 Army Aviation Corps was raised with its own shoulder/cap titles and induction of officers became permanent in the new corps.

The life in the Air OP was routine participating in the Army exercises, taking part in Artillery shoots at the ranges and doing own drills for the operations from the ALG's

Air OP School was raised on 1 January, 1959 Lt Col (Later Lieut General) A.B. Awan was the Commandant. In October 1962 Dhamial was raised as Army Air Base with Lieutenant Colonel Jabbar as the first Base Commander. In February 1964 it was redesignated as Army Aviation Base.



Captain Azmat Awan (3rd from Left standing) undergoing flying training at UK - 1947



Army Pilots undergoing flying training at Chaklala - 1952

Standing L to R: Javed, Hashmi, Iqbal, Mirza, Riaz.
Sitting L to R: Nazir Ahmad, Liaquat Bokhari and Siddiqui



Chaklala Airfield was the home of Army Aviation from 1947 - 1957



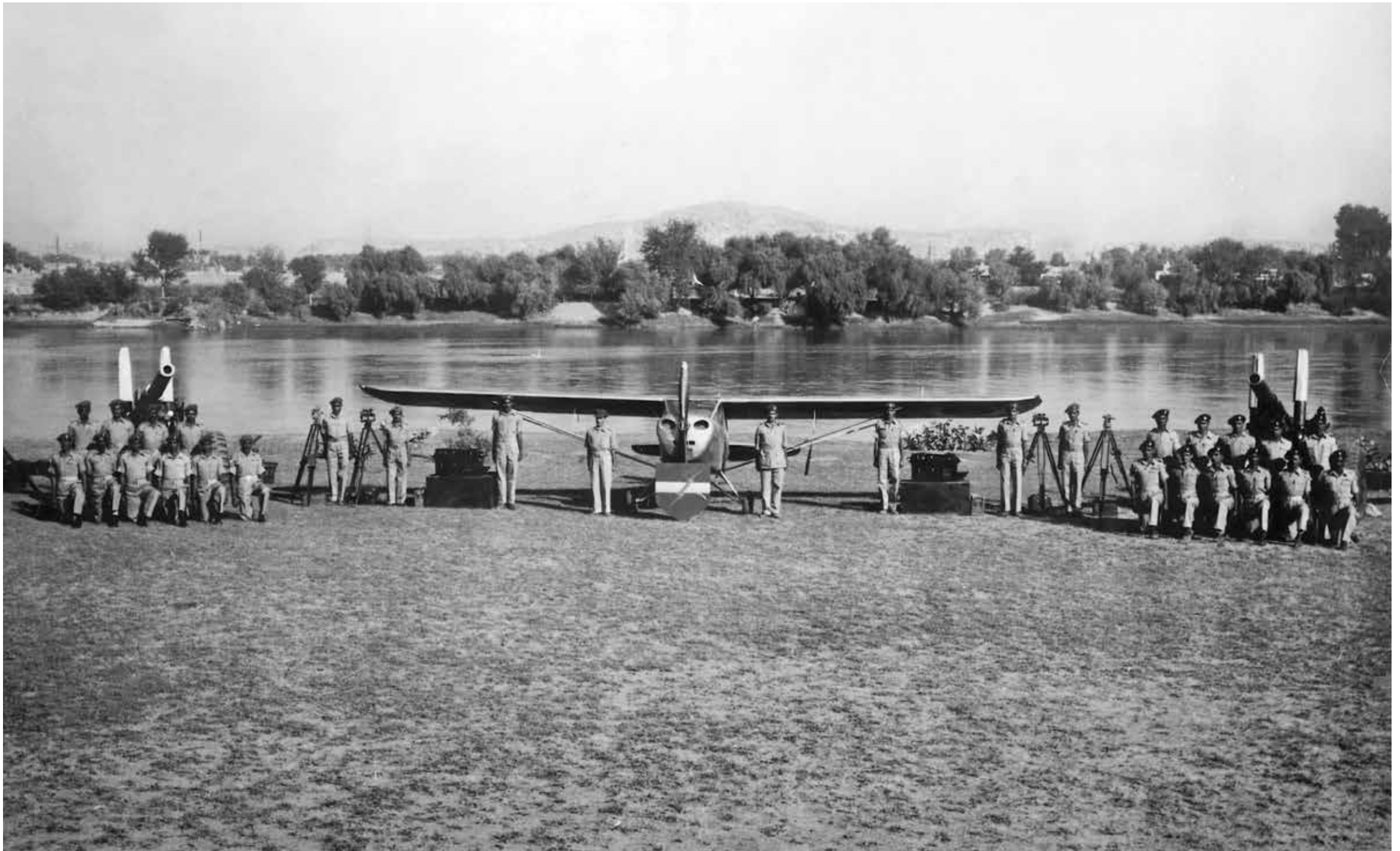
General Ayub Khan inspecting L-19 in 1956



General Ayub Khan travelling in a L-19



U8-F 1st fixed wing twin engine of Pakistan Army



No. 1 Air OP Flight at Nowshehra Artillery Firing Ranges 1952

No. 1 Air OP Flight 1950



Captain Jabbar, Major Awan (Flight Commander) Havildar Aziz, Mrs Major Leworthy, Havildar Rahmat, Major Leworthy (Flying Instructor), Captain Salemullah, Captain Blaker.



General Gracey awarding flying brevet to Lieutenant Ahmed. 1951



General Gracey awarding flying brevet to Lieutenant Saleemullah. 1949



General Gracey awarding flying brevet to Captain M.M. Karim. 1951



On 12th January 1951 at Chaklala, General Sir Douglas Gracey Commander-in-Chief Pakistan Army awarded flying brevets to three Army Pilots namely Captain Blaker, Captain Ahmed and Captain Karim. General Gracey in 1949 awarded the flying brevet to Lieutenant Saleemullah the first Officer to be trained in Pakistan.



Lt Gen Azmat Bukhsh Awan, 1st Flight Commander and
1st Colonel Commandant of Army Aviation

Pakistan Army Aviators undergoing rotary wing training in USA 1962



Induction of L-19 and OH-13S

Under American military aid , no less than 62 L-19 Bird Dogs fixed wing aircraft, 18, OH-13S single engine helicopter and one twin engine U-8F aircraft were inducted in Pakistan Army between 1958-1964. Pilots were sent to USA for flying training and American maintenance crew also imparted and helped in raising the maintenance battalion in Pakistan. In 1956, two fixed wing flying squadrons were raised namely No.1 and No.2 Air OP Squadrons, in 1964 No.3 Rotary Squadron was raised alongwith No.199 EME Battalion. An Aviation School was also raised at Dhamial, and in 1964 the Air OP designation was elevated into Army Aviation.



Host American Instructors and their families warmly and cordially interacted with the Pakistani Army Aviators



Major Mushtaq Madni

Commandant



Major Muhammad Khan

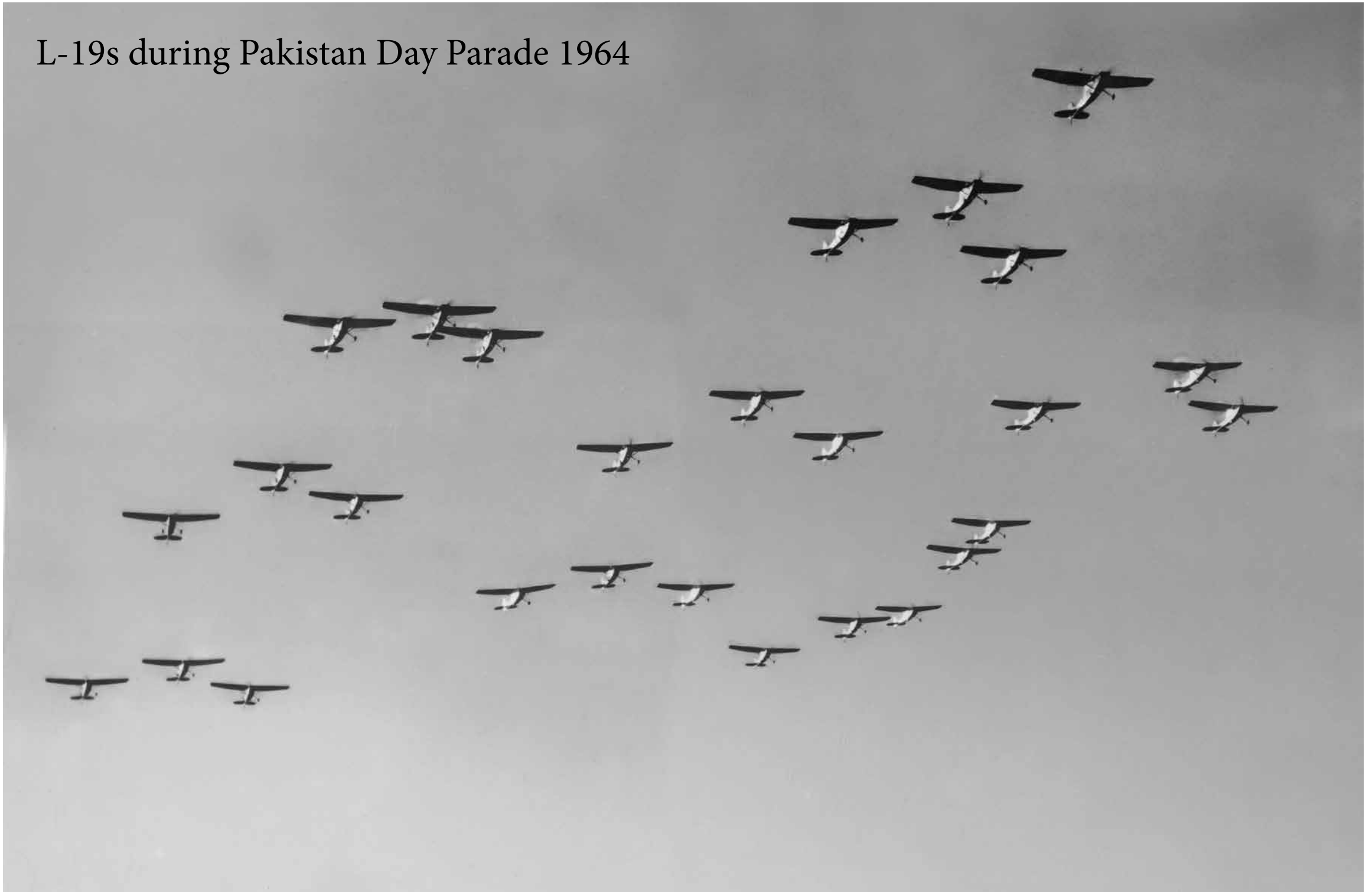
Commandant

Captain Kureishy

OH-13S during Pakistan Day Parade 1965



L-19s during Pakistan Day Parade 1964





Rann of Kutch

Rann was the first armed conflict between Pakistan and India after the Kashmir campaigns of 1948.

Topography

Roughly north of parallel 24 degrees east of Karachi, a desolate area of mud, swamp and salt stretches eastward for almost 200 miles into India. For much of the year the great Rann of Kutch (Rann means battlefield in Sanskrit) remains submerged in sea water. In summer it becomes one of the hottest places on earth, it is not a desert but then neither it is a plain or sea. Bhits are few feet of raised grounds and population is scarce, only around brackish water holes. Their only living is making salt from sea water.

Chronology

The international boundary between India and Pakistan was never really demarcated in this area during the 1947 Independence from British Raj. Even during the reign of Raj the boundary between Sindh and princely state of Bhuj was undetermined mainly due to its vastness and absolute dearth of life. The weather phenomenon receded the sea to an extent that 3500 square kilometres area became disputed. In 1951, Sindh Police and Rangers established a few posts along southern edge of Pakistan side of Rann. In 1953, these posts were abandoned due to cyclone, which were later claimed by the Indians. In 1958, Prime Ministers; Noon and Nehru discussed these posts and matter was put into cold till 1965.

The Story of Dwarka Reconnaissance

A year before the conflict, two L-19s carried out first ever cross border aerial reconnaissance. Captain Mir Saadat Ullah of 1 Army Aviation Squadron joins the Rann of Kutch conflict on 18th April 1964 when he took off from Dhamial Base in L-19 No.984 with him in another L-19 was the formation leader Captain Subhan Baig. Both pilots reached Hyderabad after flying eight hours and fifteen minutes having refuelled at Multan and Jacobabad en-route. Captain Saadat Ullah narrates. “In February 1962 a flight of 2 Squadron had co-operated with 19 Baloch Regiment in Hyderabad area in which Captains Nazir, Younas, Subhan Baig and Sarfraz took part. Back in 1961 Captain Rafiq and Captain Siraj had also flown to Karachi for co-operation with 19 Baloch Regiment. The background of these missions was to facilitate the 19 Baloch Regiment in preparing contingency plans involving commando raids on Indian naval installations. 19 Baloch Regiment later evolved into present day Special Services Group, at that time was also responsible for training of naval commandos. I had three hundred hours of flying experience. We both were briefed by our Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Zafar regarding the secrecy and sensitivity of the mission. Our aircraft were fitted with Air Control Traffic sets for communication with PAF fighters and ground communication.

The mission was to support the Special Services Group in carrying out the reconnaissance of Rann of Kutch. At Hyderabad we landed at Combined Military Hospital Strip(no more existing) and were received by Captain Vardag and Captain Sadiq of Special Services Group(SSG). Captain Vardag of Pakistan Army was commanding PNS Himalaya for over four years and was the brain behind these plans. He had been trained in America for underwater commando operations. He had convinced the higher authorities on the feasibility of destroying certain Indian naval installations by using his elite naval commando force. He had also been practicing jumps from the amphibious aircraft of PAF, Albatross SA-16. This company of SSG was stationed at Bholari Airfield for secrecy. Captain Vardag informed us of carrying out aerial photography of the Dwarka radar station located at the edge of Rann of Kutch. Subsequently Captain Subhan Baig planned the mission for the next morning and co-ordinated with Mauripur and Drigh Road Airbases apart from Badin radar station. We were given the ACT frequencies and were instructed to keep listening watch and in case of emergency to give them a SOS call.

Preliminary Reconnaissance. On 19th April 1964 we took off from Hyderabad with Captain Vardag and Captain Sadiq on board for preliminary reconnaissance of the target area. We flew to within one mile of the target area maintaining 15 feet of height. We could have flown even more low as Rann is as flat as a billiard table with scanty bushes here and there. After two hours and fifteen minutes of flying we returned to Hyderabad. We found the general target area clear, without any movement. Both guerrilla captains left for Bholari to brief their company. SSG at that time was tasked to prepare contingency plans for all disputed territories. With the help of Army Aviators these two commando officers wanted to have a close look at the radar and carry out photography. Pilots and commandos discussed all eventualities including reaction of Indian Air Force and ground based weapons, thus an outline plan was conceived for the reconnaissance. The general outline of the plan revolved around SSG infiltrating on the same night (19 April 1964) and placing themselves close to the target. They were to provide physical cover to pilots in case of any emergency. These SSG troops also had the ACT sets”.

Overhead Dwarka

Lieutenant Colonel retired Saadat Ullah further narrates “ On 21st April 1964, Captain Baig with Captain Vardag and myself with Captain Sadiq got airborne from Hyderabad Strip at 0600 hours. We were in communication with SSG troops who had infiltrated close to the target area apart from Badin and Karachi Air Bases. At 0730 hours we reached Dwarka area maintaining tree top level, we were 500 yards away from the radar station. Close to the radar Captain Baig pulled up to 300 feet above ground level and I followed him. Simultaneously both SSG officers started taking photographs. We made West to East runs and later North to South runs. The enemy on ground did not react although army vehicles were visible. Probably Indians were too surprised to react. After three minutes of photography we rushed back. Flying at ten feet, we first hit Rahim Ki Bazar and later reached Hyderabad. Squadron Leader Butt officer incharge at Badin Radar rang us and informed, as soon as we left the target area two Indian jets were spotted on the radar screen for over fifteen minutes.

Mission Not Yet Over. Same day, we flew to Drigh Road where films were developed and at night Captain Vardag and Captain Sadiq gave the bad news that western side of the target area has not been photographed and it is vital for any successful raid on the target. Captain Baig without any hesitation agreed to undertake the mission again on 22nd April. Captain Baig sensing that enemy is alerted wisely changed the take off time to 0430 hours, he also altered flying routes. Now instead of coming to Hyderabad we would be landing at Mauripur Air Base. Flying over sea for over forty minutes for a non swimmer like me was horrible thought, SSG officers assured me, come what may they will swim me to the shore.

Final Run. On 22 April 1964, we took off from Hyderabad in dark at 0430 hours and planned to reach target area by 0600 hours. Everything went as planned and we hit the south-eastern side of the radar station keeping a distance of 800 yards from it. SSG officers took the requisite photographs. On the third run we were fired upon by the ground troops, meanwhile Badin Radar also came on the air and advised us to exit the target area as two Indian jets were approaching from a distance of 200 miles. We immediately went down to the sea level and headed for Karachi, Captain Baig was maintaining 10 feet and I was slightly higher than him. The total flying time from Dwarka to Somiani was about 35 minutes and after 15 minutes of flying Mauripur Base came on air to tell us that two Sabres of PAF were airborne to provide us the cover. We landed safely at Mauripur. On 25th April, we both proceeded to Jacobabad and on 26th April we reached back Dhamial.”



January 1965

In January 1965, Indians started probing forward. They reached our posts at Mara, Rahim ki Bazaar, Ding, Kanjarkot and Surai. Indians also reinforced the area with 2 battalions of Border Security Force. On 19th February, Indian aircraft violated our airspace. On 6th March, General Headquarters ordered Major General Tikka Khan to allow no further violation of own territory. General Tikka had following troops under his command:

6 Brigade	Brigadier Iftikhar Janjua (6 Punjab, 15 Punjab, 2 Frontier Force).
51 Brigade	Brigadier KM Azhar (18 Punjab, 6 Baluch, 8 Frontier Force).
52 Brigade	Brigadier Sardar Ismail (7 Punjab, 17 Baluch).

3 Engineers Battalion, 14 Signal Battalion, 24 Cavalry (joined later from Lahore) and 12 Cavalry (one squadron). Divisional Artillery was commanded by Brigadier Aslam, 14 Field, 25 Field, 38 Field, 12 Medium, 83 Mortar Battery and 88 Mortar Battery.

Indian Troops

31 Brigade	Area Sardar Post - Ggid Kot - Karim Shah.
50 Para Brigade	Area Dharm Sala - Biar Bhit.
AMX Tank Regiment	Karma- Biar Bhit - Dharm Sala.
Artillery	11 & 167 Field Regiments and 71 Medium Battery.

April 1965

To support the forthcoming operations in the area, General Headquarters decided to inject army aviation effort in the area. Two sections of L-19 piloted by Captain Zafar and Captain Mir Saadat were rushed in on 8th April. They reached in the nick of time to support the operations of 51 Brigade.

10th April, onwards General Headquarters supplemented the aviation effort with additional L-19s. Major Fazal subsequently built up a full fledged fixed wing flight with Captain Hesam (who earned the distinction of being the first non-gunner flight commander in Army Aviation, commanded an infantry battalion in 1971 War against India and was wounded as well, before his repatriation to Bangladesh). Others were Captains Khalid Saeed, Farooq, H.U.K. Niazi and Jaffar. Maintenance support was provided by 199 EME Battalion.

51 Brigade

51 Brigade launched attack at 0200 hours on 9th April, with an objective to capture following:-

Phase I – Capture of Sardar Post (18 Punjab & 8 FF). At 0330 hours, 8 FF was halted 500 yards short of post and by 0530 hours assaulting companies were pulled back from the objective.

Phase II – Capture of Jungle Post (6 Baluch). At 0445 hours, battalion had captured an out post and at 1130 hours, they were 2000 yards short of the enemy post, having difficulty in getting fire support from 14 Field Regiment.

At 1400 hours, Brigadier Azhar was informed by the Air Observation Post (OP) regarding Indian reinforcement of 70-80 vehicles on their way to Sardar Post. Therefore at 1530 hours, attack was called off.

First Operational Use of Helicopters

On 18th April GHQ ordered the move of two helicopters to Badin for Rann of Kutch Operations. This was the first operational use of the choppers by Pakistan Army. Lieutenant Colonel Naseer Ullah Khan Babar, the Squadron Commander and Captain Manzoor Kamal Bajwa scrambled to support the operation with two OH-13(S) helicopters, No. 143 and 144. It was a long hop; they took off from Dhamial Base at 1330 hours on 18th April and reached Badin at 1740 hours on 19th April 1965 with refuelling at Sargodha, Multan, Khanpur, Sukkur and Nawabshah. Major Bajwa recalls that, “It was Sunday and I was the duty officer at Dhamial when at 1100 hours, I got a call from GHQ that two helicopters are on 6 hours notice. After some time I got the call to take off in 30 minutes. Weather was inclement, Lieutenant Colonel Babar who was living in Lalazar Estate, decided to come along as most of other pilots were busy in promotion examination. Helicopters zigzagged through thunderstorm and rain. At Sargodha we were briefed by the met officer. We eventually had to pass through two fronts before we reached Badin. At one point we decided to force land but there was no dry place visible and entire landscape was submerged in 2 feet water. We flew at tree top level, luckily avoiding poles and high tension wires.” Maintenance crew included Havildar (Major retired) Malang Ali Shah and other technicians reached Badin by train next day.

An Aviator's Commitment and Spirit of Sacrifice

During the deployment, one of the pilots, Captain Farooq fell sick with serious kidney ailment but refused to leave the operational area. The flying posture further aggravated his condition but he continued flying with the help of pain killers till the very end of the operation. By the time the operation finished and he reported for medical help the very next day, the damage was already done and this dedicated and spirited aviator could not recover from

OH-13S during Rann of Kutch Conflict - 1965



serious renal complications. Such is the blazing trail of sacrifice and professional commitment which was left as the proud legacy, to be followed by coming generations wherever and whenever Army Aviation is called upon to serve the mother land in peace and war.

First Trans - Frontier Rotary Reconnaissance

6 Brigade had information of major Indian build up across the enemy side of the Rann of Kutch. The brigade commander desired to ascertain correct enemy strength before launching the offensive at Biar Bhit. Being a hazardous mission it was not meant for an unarmed helicopter. The target to be reconnoitred was approximately 20 kilometres away from own brigade headquarters. The pilot (Captain Bajwa) was informed that, reportedly there were no anti-aircraft guns at the enemy location, but small arms fire from the ground could be expected.

On 22nd April, Captain Bajwa along with Brigadier Janjua and Lieutenant Colonel Nagi proceeded for the reconnaissance. In order to shorten the enemy reaction time, the pilot proceeded towards north along the border, concealed behind the sand dunes. When abeam the enemy location the pilot crossed over to the Rann. The dry Rann was flat and smooth like a tabletop. The helicopter dashed across, barely 20 feet above the flat dust free bed, heading for the location barely 13 kilometres from our Forward Defensive Localities (FDL). When in sight of the enemy location the pilot pulled up to 3500 feet just before overhead the enemy. “Two hasty figure 8 turns were executed to look around before heading back. Surprisingly we did not encounter any ground fire. The force on the ground was much below expectations. It turned out to be less than a company”.

Once out of enemy range the pilot descended to the deck level and dashed towards the nearest FDLs, and disappeared among the bushes and the high sand dunes. Minutes before crossing the home boundary he noticed two Indian jets at approximately 3000 feet. Fortunately the jets turned back short of the border. This reconnaissance was useful as the ultimate direction of the successful offensive was diverted to the right, towards Chad Bet and Point 84.

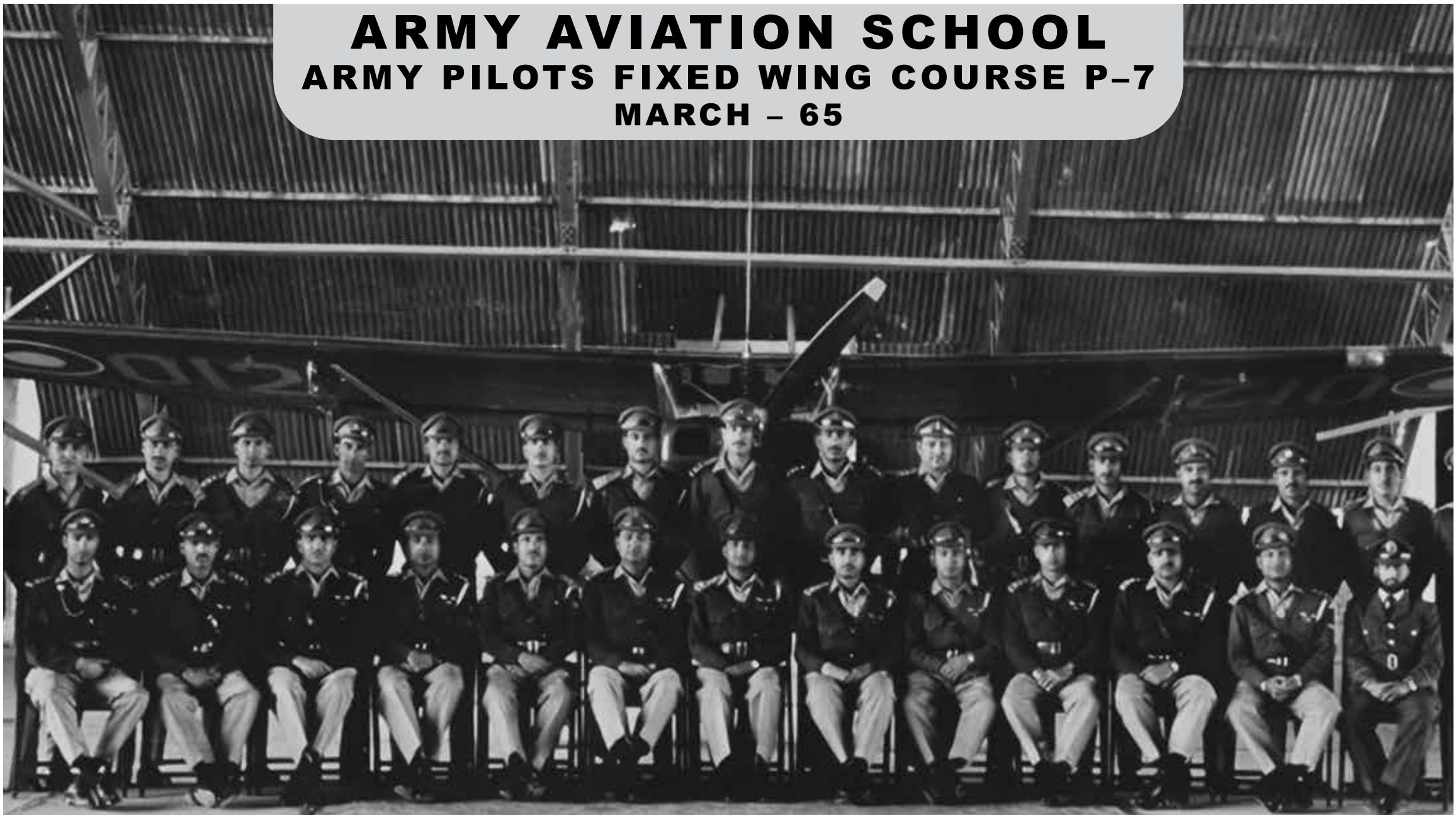
Capture of Point 84

On 23 April 1965 at 1700 hours, Brigadier Janjua gave the orders to capture Point 84 on 24 April mainly due to the aerial reconnaissance. On 24 April, from 1100 hours to 1430 hours the area was kept under observation by pilots in L-19 and gave vital information regarding the enemy dispositions. 3 Squadron War Diary records the fact, “The helicopter took part in the attack and capture of Point 84 position. One Indian Canberra bomber dived and made feint attack on our helicopter.”

ARMY AVIATION SCHOOL

ARMY PILOTS FIXED WING COURSE P-7

MARCH – 65

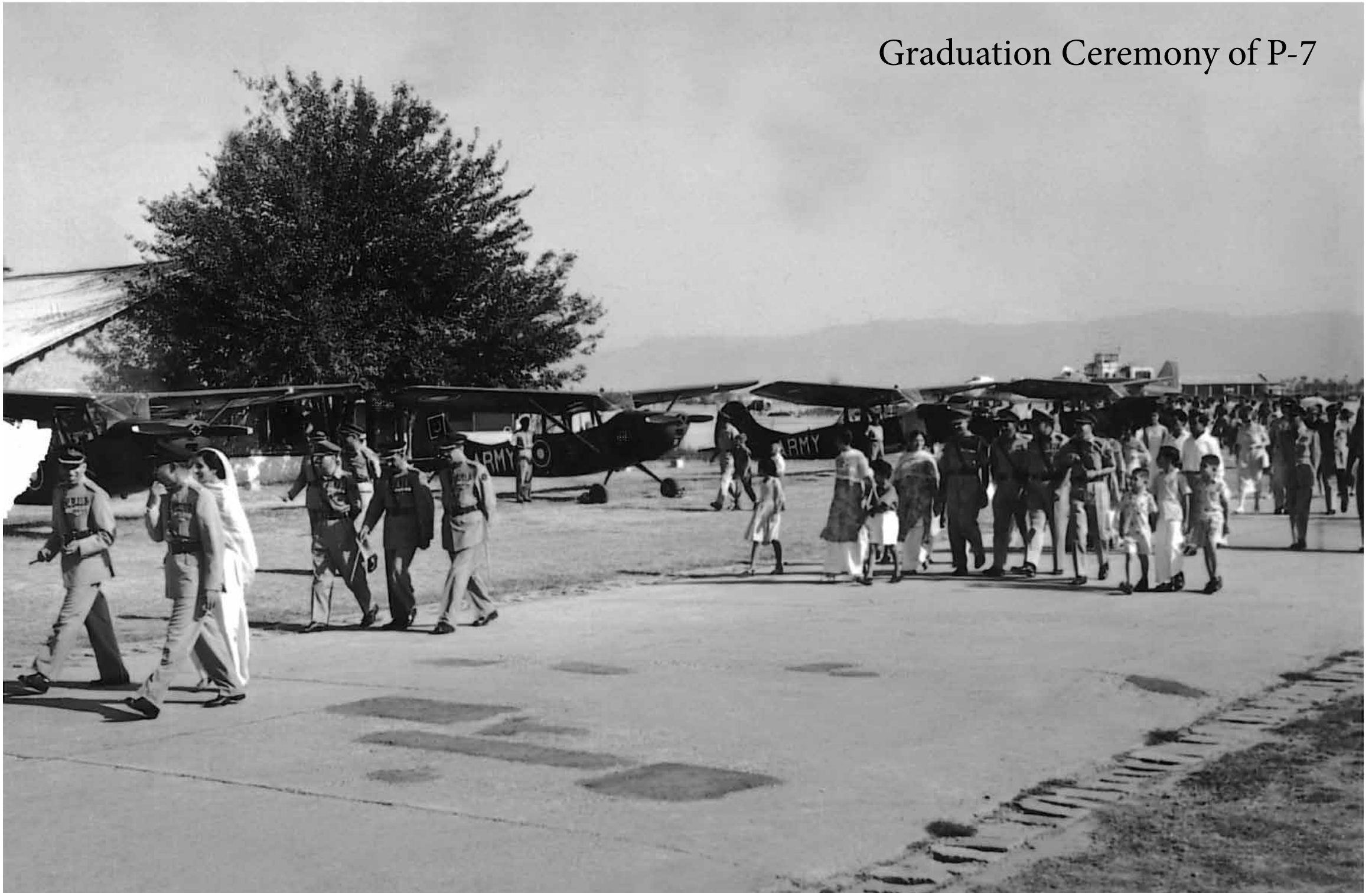


Sitting L to R: Capt Sajjad Ahmed Nazim. (FI) Capt Khalid Jawaaid Janjuah. (QFT) Capt Sheraz Khan. (GFI) Capt MAR Kallue. (GFT) Capt Nasim Ahmad. (Adjt) Maj Aftab Iqbal. (Cfu) Lt Col Malik Mokhtar Karim. (COMDT)

Maj M H Saqlain. (FLT COMD) Capt MAR Beg. (FI) Capt PC Tierney (FI) Capt Chaudhri Hamid Hussain. (QFT) Capt MS Baig. (FT) Fit Lt Abdul Majid. (Met Offrs)

Standing: Capt Basit Ali Khan. Maj Ghulam Hussain Malik. Lt Jamil Hasan, Capt M Afzal Khan, Maj Aziz ur Rehman, Lt Muhammad Azhir. Lt Riaz-ul-Haq. Lt Ikram Ullah Khan, Lt Jafar Hasan Humayun, Capt Akhtar Mahmood Malik, Capt Shabir Ahmed Khan. Lt Jawaaid Hamid. Capt Ahmad Murtaza, Lt Abdul Majid, Capt Muhammad Daud. Lt. M Akram Khan. Maj Waheed Hyder Khan.

Graduation Ceremony of P-7



Biar Bet Operation

Aviation was tasked to undertake another reconnaissance mission, immediately after the successful attack on Point 84. The mission was to locate the enemy gun positions in the proximity of the area for a night operation. One commando officer also accompanied the pilot, Captain Bajwa in OH-13(S) for reconnaissance. Major Bajwa recalls, “Over the objective while flying a figure 8 within clear sight of the enemy artillery gun emplacements, suddenly the chopper rocked violently. The commando officer out of excitement shook my wrist, holding the delicate and sensitive cyclic control of the helicopter. The officer excitedly shouted, “You are on fire.” I immediately turned homewards and simultaneously glanced at the instruments and looked for any traces of smoke or fire. I asked, “Where is the fire?” The officer calmly pointed to the gun emplacements, from where the Indian guns had just fired a salvo, at our positions or may be tried to engage us with direct fire. Being a gunner, I could understand the direct hit by a field gun was a rare possibility, thus I turned back again to have a good look”. The attack was carried out on the same night by 2 FF and 15 Punjab on Biar Bet, which was captured by 0800 hours.

At 1000 hours, aviators who were in the air from dawn to monitor the area, saw cloud of dust and reported movement of 40 tanks towards Biar Bhit area from south west. General Tikka immediately moved 24 Cavalry located at Rahim Ki Bazaar to concentrate in area Jatrai. However, no enemy tanks appeared on the scene. Later while walking through the over run Indian position, Captain Bajwa picked up about a dozen of brass ‘*Gadwis*’ an integral part of an Indian soldier, like mugs are to our soldiers. The officers at Badin loved these rare war trophies and each one of them wanted one. So the entire collection disappeared the same evening.

Casualty Evacuation In The Darkness

During operation at Point 84 and Biar Bhit many casualties were evacuated from the frontline to Badin and Hyderabad. In one case, despite the approaching darkness, one OH-13(S), piloted by Lieutenant Colonel Naseer Ullah Khan Babar and Captain Bajwa stayed on till the arrival of the wounded soldier and then took off in pitch dark carrying one lying and one sitting wounded soldier. Since night navigation was problematic so the party at Badin was asked to fire Very-light shots at regular intervals for helping the pilots to home-on. This helped tremendously and the final touch down was made at 2130 hours. There being no litter, a 6 feet bed was made from a long crate and made comfortable with pillows and blankets.

Getting Wiser and Learning The Ropes

Some good lessons were learnt. A truly operational pilot who desires to stay fit and operational, must be self-sufficient for all provisions of water, food and adequate protective clothing to sustain himself independently. Lapses are liable to ground the pilot and the machine. At times end of the day might be the beginning of one’s longest and the most demanding mission of the day. Pilots tied conventional canvas water bag “Chagall,” filled with water on the helicopter skid, for cold and safe drinking water; it worked miraculously well and even helped the pilot making friends.

Casualty evacuation in OH-13S



Army Aviation Performance in the Rann

Both L-19 and OH-13(S) flew extensively in the poorly mapped region of Rann of Kutch with hardly any worthwhile ground object to navigate. Maps were of the scale of 1:250,000 which for Rann amounted to plain sheets. 8 Division Artillery had mixture of British, American and French equipment. Main wireless set with 14 Field, 38 Field and 12 Medium Regiments were Type 62 British Sets, whereas forward observers had PRC-10, an American Set and both did not overlap with the aviation radio sets. Regular reconnaissance of operational sectors by various commanders, helped in formulating the plans and also for any subsequent modification. During the attack of 6 Brigade, which ultimately rounded the enemy, these flying machines were invariably seen buzzing around and acting as the eyes of the commanders, directing artillery fire and performing other assigned missions. They played a significant role in the capture of Biar-Bet, Chad-Bet and Point 84.

Total sorties flown in this conflict were 746 with 864 flying hours, twenty two casualties were evacuated.



Operation Ablaze

Background of the Operation

Military setbacks in Rann of Kutch had demoralized the Indians to an extent that the then Indian Premier Shastri ordered “Operation Ablaze.” It was meant to increase pressure on Pakistani Forces in the Northern Areas. He also moved formations into their battle locations in May and captured three outlying posts in Kargil area on 16 May 1965. Pakistan took preventive measures and deployed its field formations to prevent any Indian misadventure.

Deployment of Aviation Assets

Army Aviation Base Dhamial, also took the requisite steps which included deployment of squadrons with affiliated formations resultantly on 6th May 1965, 2 Army Aviation Squadron moved out in support of 1 Corps and On 28th May 1965, 1 Army Aviation Squadron also moved in 1 Corps area. To asses

the feasibility of helicopter operations in the Northern Area a ground reconnaissance was also carried out between 21-24 June 1965. Dhamial Base had its assets dispersed from Badin to Sialkot in June 1965 as follows:-

		L-19	OH-13
1 Squadron			
In support of 7 Division	Balloki	9	3
8 Division	Badin	2	
2 Squadron			
In support of 1 Corps	Kharian	3	
	Lahore	4	
	Sialkot	2	2
	Rahwali	4	3
3 Squadron			
In support of 18 Division	Badin	10	5



L-19

August 1965 - Operation Gibraltar

Pakistan's Answer to Operation Ablaze

In the spring of 1965, simmering agitation in occupied Kashmir intensified due to arrest of Sheikh Abdullah and Hazaratbal incident. Pakistan Army was watchful of the events that were unfolding as a result of Indian aggression, in curbing the freedom movement. In the summer of 1965 the tactical situation in upper Kashmir due to "Operation Ablaze" warranted a quid pro quo in lower Kashmir. Operation Gibraltar was thus aimed at balancing the tactical situation apart from exploiting the unrest in occupied Kashmir, both politically and militarily.

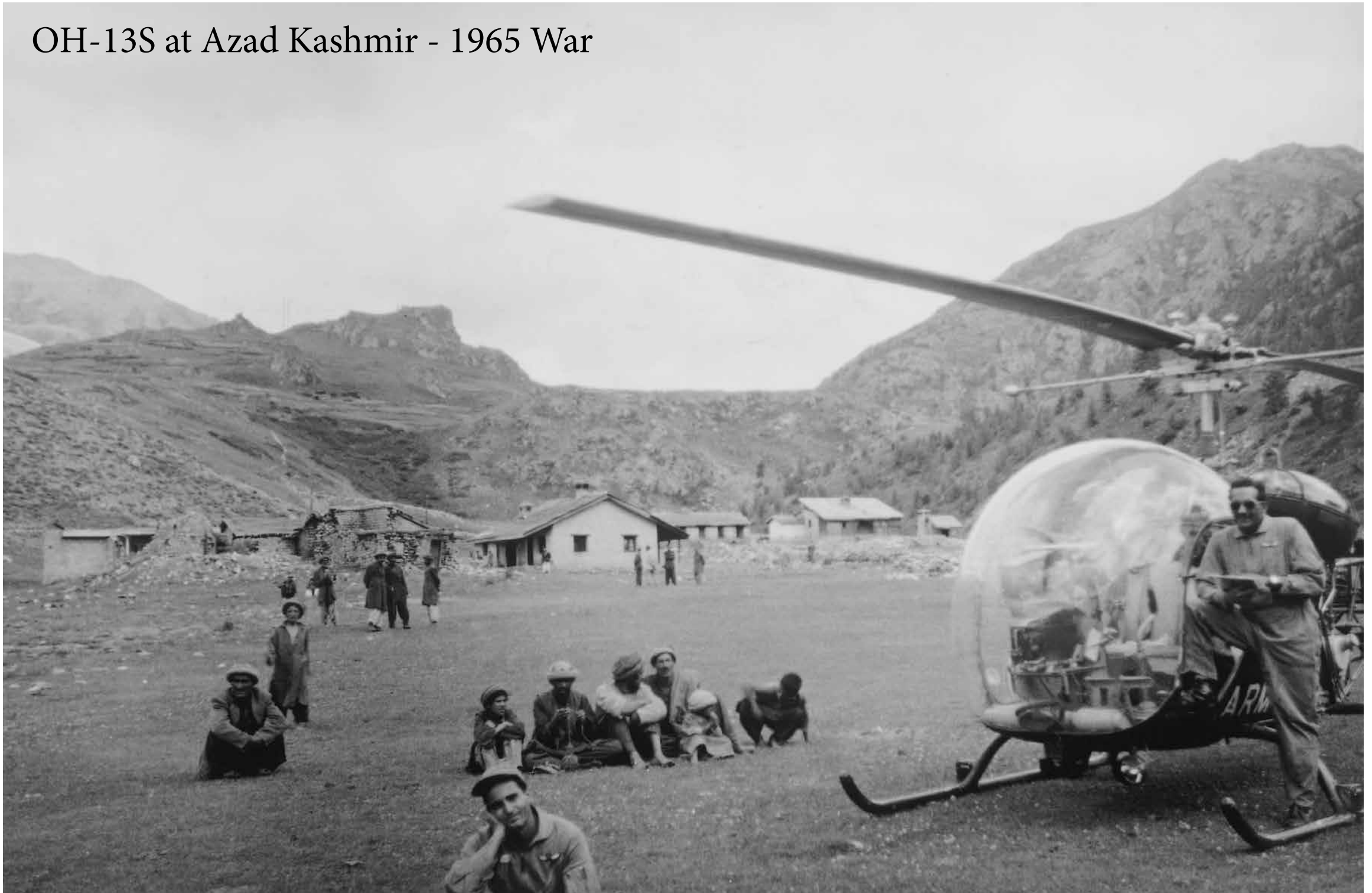
Role of Army Aviation in 'Operation Gibraltar'

3 Squadron was the mainstay in the initial phase of this operation. Pilots would fly to Murree or Muzaffarabad in pairs, there the flight crew chief would get down and general officer commanding(GOC) and brigade commanders would carryout the reconnaissance of the area, at times pilots stayed days in divisional headquarters and flew the commanders to monitor the Cease Fire Line (CFL). Squadron utilized this opportunity in getting necessary training for mountain flying. At times three pilots would sit in one helicopter, while commanders would be taken as passengers in the other.



OH-13S at Gultari - 1965 War

OH-13S at Azad Kashmir - 1965 War



Commanding Officer- 2 Army Aviation Squadron's Account

Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Khan, was commanding 2 Army Aviation Squadron during "Operation Gibraltar." It would be just appropriate to reproduce some relevant portions, from his hand written diary.

"At about 1500 hours on 13th August 1965, I received a call from Major Abdul Qayyum, the General Staff Officer, Grade-2 of Dhamial Base who told me to proceed to Bhimber next morning to attend an important conference at the sector headquarters at 1000 hours in connection with an operation."

"I decided to take a flight commander along to put him in picture straight away. I rang up the Aviation Officers Mess where only Major Sarfraz Rabbani was available and I asked him to accompany me the next day in a separate aircraft to Bhimber. There next day, after waiting for some time in the office of brigade major (BM) where we caught our breaths back not because of thrilling flight but rather due to the fact that the jeep which was bringing us from the landing strip had brake failures at one of the sharp high bend. I was taken to the commander who spelled out details about the operation commencing on 15th August 1965.

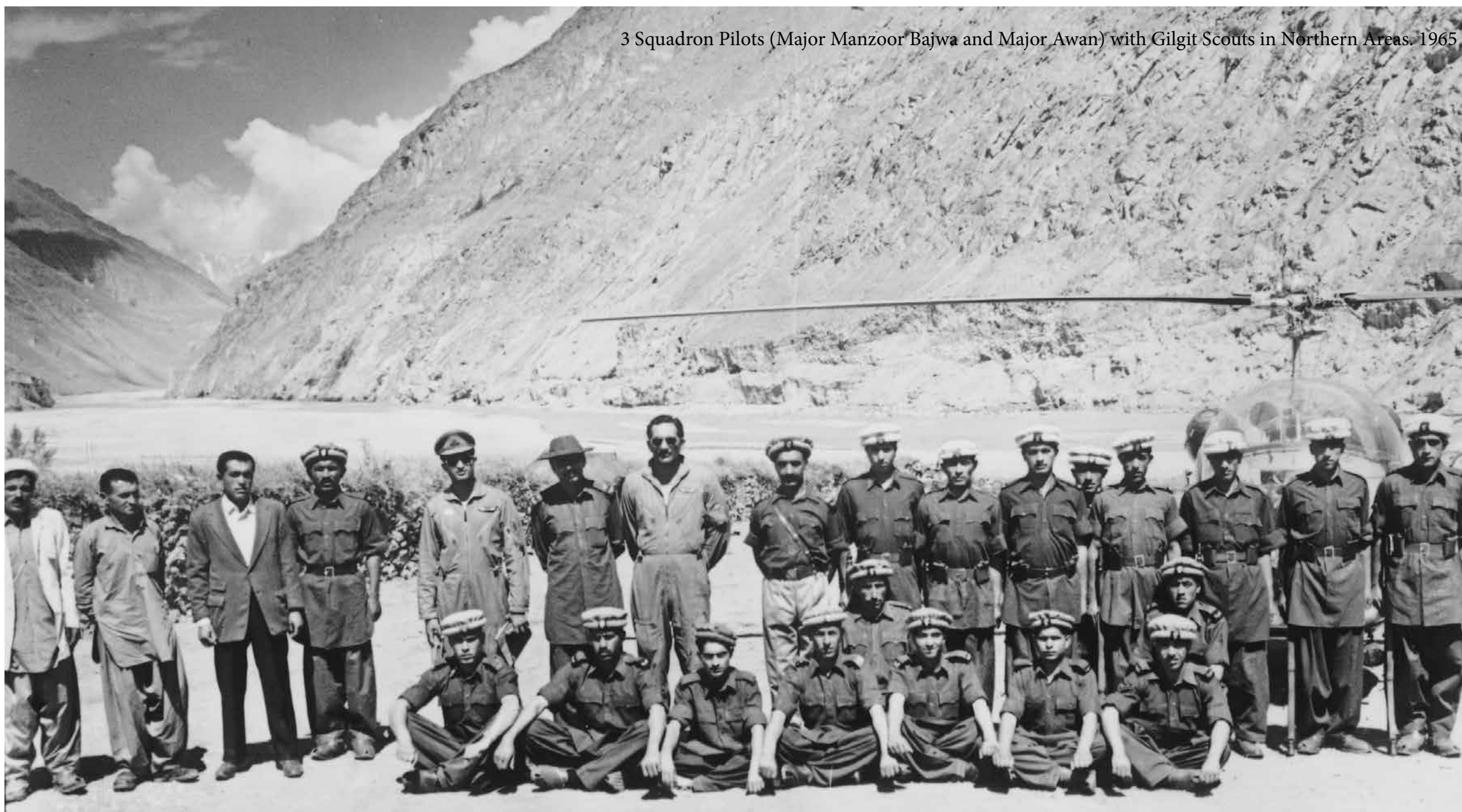
In specific terms we were to fly within our own airspace and engage some already known targets and also engage any impromptu ones. We were not allowed to carry out any aerial observation that day to avoid Indians getting any inkling, so we decided to go to a dominating forward post to recognize the possible targets and familiarize ourselves with the area. The trip was useful as it helped us to get introduced to enemy positions around Lalleal Feature, Red Hill, Mango Hill, Dewa, Chamb, Sakrana, Munawar etc."

"Since Bhimber was in Azad Kashmir so to avoid any hostile air attack, which was a great possibility under the escalating confrontation, I decided to position my aircraft at Gujrat Airfield. Accordingly orders were passed for the required ground party which arrived there on 14th August, led by Captain Muazzam Ali Shah and in good time established the camp and I returned to Dhamial."

The First Aerial Shoot

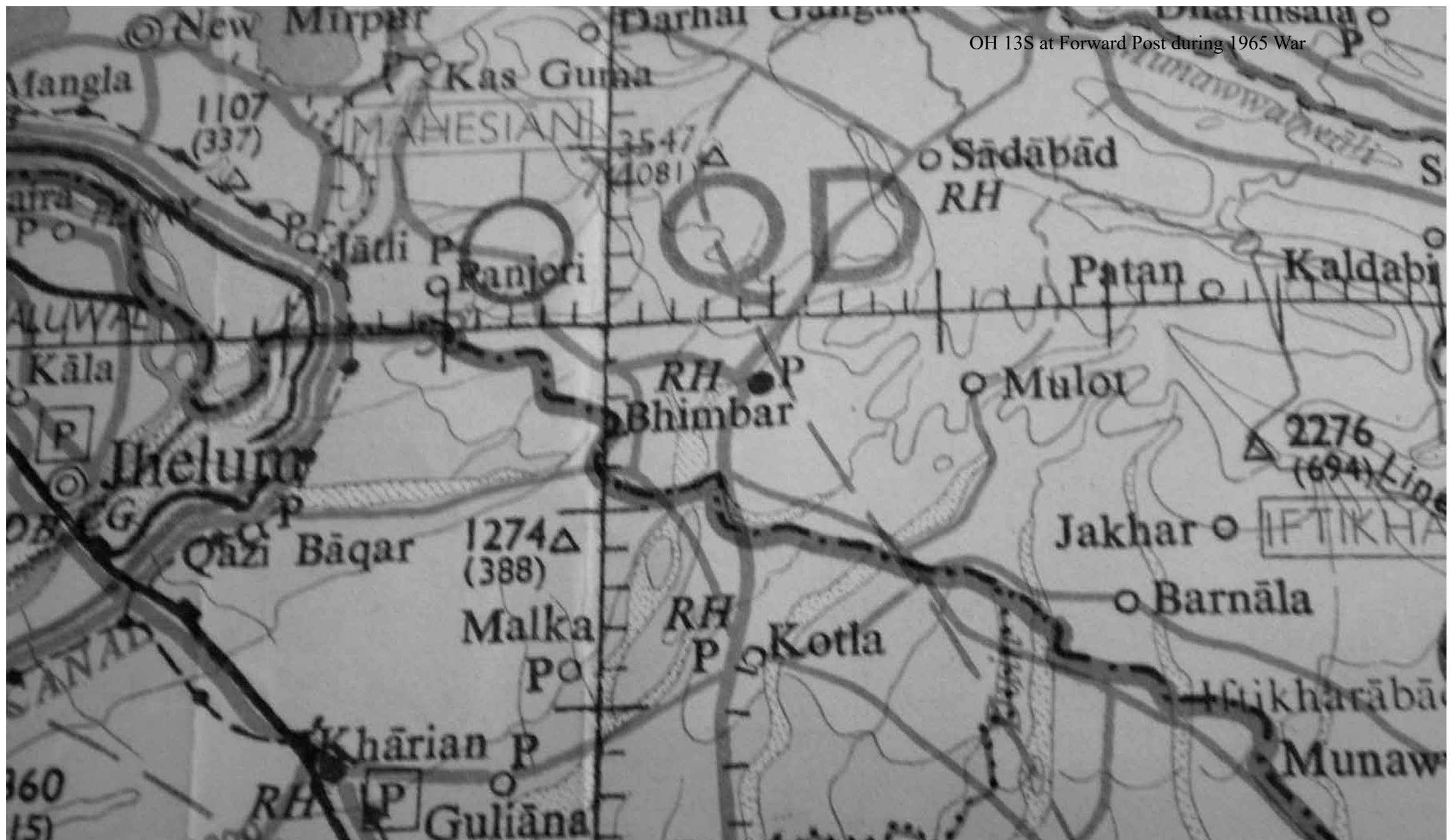
On 15th August 1965 Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Khan took off from Dhamial with his Second-in-Command, Major Akhtar and reached Bhimber by about 0545 hours. Artillery had already opened up as planned and after a visit to the brigade majors' office he took off for the war zone. Major Sarfraz Rabbani accompanied him as the observer. Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Khan writes

"We brought Artillery Fire on the enemy positions around Dewa and a huge cloud of black smoke started rising from the area. Subsequently it became known that an ammunition dump has been hit, a petrol depot was set on fire and some soft vehicles were also destroyed.". 4 Corps Artillery War Diary records 'The Air OP directed our fire with such telling effects that this Indian Regiment never recovered from the punishment'. Colonel Khan further narrates, "Later I took Captain Muazzam Ali Shah to familiarize him with the area and Major Rabbani flew Major Akhtar. The day was clear with no clouds anywhere but suddenly a squall hit the area in the afternoon and one aircraft at the Bhimber Strip got damaged because of poor picketing. Luckily I managed to fly it



to Gujrat for necessary repairs and from then onward proper picketing arrangements were made at the strip. Realising the scope of future activities, on 16th August, I moved Captain Anwar and Captain Anis Akram Beg to join Major Rabbani. In addition, Major Ayub and Captain Ross Mahmood were also sent to establish rapport with the field commanders and get to know the area of operation. Now I had a full flight there with an additional flight commander to plug in, if and when required.”

Both the flight commanders formed part of “O”(Orders) Group of Major General Akhtar Malik. Comprehensive orders were received and necessary instructions were issued with regards to the impending operation. A comprehensive Fire Support Plan was given by Brigadier Amjad Ali, Commander Artillery. A high degree of secrecy was maintained and emphasized thus obscuring use of Air OPs till launching of the ‘Operation Grand Slam.’



September 1965- Operation Grand Slam

Operational Concept

Operation Gibraltar fell short of its objectives. In order to relieve the pressure on 12 Division, Pakistan Army launched pre-planned contingency 'Operation Grand Slam.' The operation envisaged crossing the cease fire line, capturing Akhnur via Jaurian, with the additional employment of 7 Strike Division. This would cut the Indian Main Supply Route (MSR) to Jammu, thus paving the way for liberation of Indian Held Kashmir (IHK). Grand Slam was so well conceived, directed and executed that it almost delivered the knock out punch.

Dhamial Base Gets Ready For The War

At about 1230 hours on 30th August 1965, new base commander, Colonel Azmat Baksh Awan held a conference which was attended by all commanding and staff officers. Base Commander briefed the officers on the conduct of 'Operation Gibraltar' and the future plans. Colonel Awan had attended the coordination conference of 12 Division on 29/30 August 1965. 1 Army Aviation Squadron was already placed on 6 hours notice since 28th August. Anticipating developments, some restructuring was done for the aviation support being made available to various formations. At Dhamial OH-13S, Beavers, L-19 and L-23 were dispersed under trees and adjoining open area. Aircraft would also fly out in the morning to Fateh Jang and were flown back to the base in the evening.

Operational Affiliation Of The Army Aviation Squadrons

1 Army Aviation Squadron, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Mian Mahmud was grouped with 7 Infantry Division. Squadron Headquarters along with one flight consisting of four L-19s moved to Gujrat, two L-19s were also placed at Kharian. The officers at Kharian included: Lieutenant Colonel M M Mahmud, Major Nazir Ahmed, Lieutenant Muhammad Qasim, Captain M Saeed (EME) and Captain Khalid Saeed Khan. In addition, three OH-13S helicopters from 3 Squadron were also placed under command 1 Squadron. Two helicopters were placed at Kharian (Major Bokhari with helicopter No.148 along with Captain Askree in helicopter No.140). Captain Aftab with his helicopter No.136 was to remain at Gujrat. The designated elements of 1 Squadron arrived at Gujrat on 31st August at 1000 hours, where a detailed briefing was given by Major Rabbani in the evening, with the flair of a war veteran.

2 Army Aviation Squadron, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Khan already had its one flight (No.6) operating from Bhimber in support of 12 Division. This Flight No. 6 consisting of Major Sarfraz Rabbani (flight commander), Captain Pervaiz Zaka, Captain Anis Akram Beg and Captain Anwar Hussain, were now placed under command 1 Squadron, and rest of the 2 Squadron was placed at 6 hours notice. Some pilots were exchanged between 1 and 2 Squadrons to utilize the benefit of the acquired battle experience and the knowledge of the terrain gained.

3 Army Aviation Squadron, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Naseer Ullah Babar was placed at Dhamial with few of its helicopters placed in support of field formations. Squadron's primary task was to look after the Kashmir Sector.

The Operational Plan

7 Division was part of Army Strike Force, it had arrived in the area at 2340 hours 30 August 1965 and established its tactical headquarters at Jalalpur. At some stage it had to take over the operational charge from 12 Division.

H –Hour 0500 hours, 1st September 1965.

Phase-1. Securing of the line River Munawar Tawi, with the destruction of enemy forces west of Tawi in Laleall, Dewa, Sakrana area by 4 Sector (ex-12 Division) and 102 Brigade (ex-7 Division).

Phase-2. Capture of Akhnur by 10 Brigade Group(ex-7 Division).

1st September 1965, a Historical Day

Lieutenant Colonel Mahmud, Commanding Officer 1 Squadron, carried out a dawn reconnaissance and gave orders for the occupation of a strip near village Guliana. The squadron headquarters and part of Flight No. 2 moved to Guliana.

Commanding Officer 2 Army Aviation Squadron, Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Khan narrates: “On 1st September 1965, I took-off from Dhamial very early and landed at Bhimber Strip at about 0530 hours, by that time Captain Anis was already airborne but could not engage any target due to poor visibility. On his return, I took-off along with Major Rabbani and on reaching the line of contact I saw own tanks, some bogged down on the left flank, while others in battle position on the right flank in front of Moel. There I recognized Brigadier Hameed, wearing steel helmet and holding field glasses while conducting the operation. He waved at us and we continued in the haze of war to pick up any worth while target. In the meantime a message from 4 Corps Artillery came that Chamb had fallen and we were asked to confirm it.

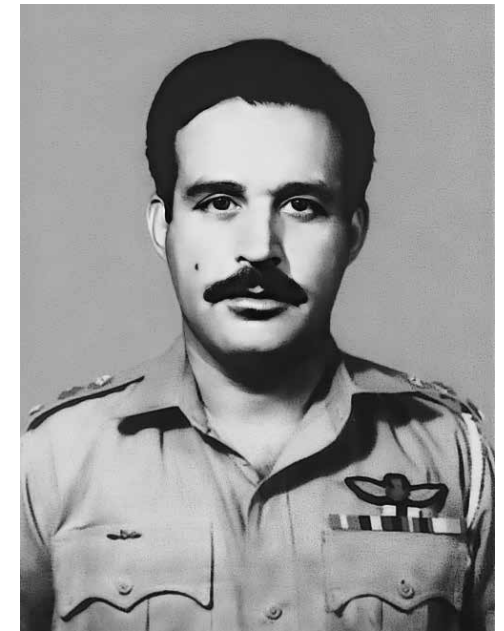
I immediately changed my course and headed towards Chamb. I was following the track leading to Chamb from Moel. On the approach I saw a burntout jeep with some dead bodies around it but could not recognise them. However, as we approached nearer we came under heavy automatic fire. We informed the artillery headquarters but were told emphatically that these were own troops and would be directed not to shoot at own aircraft. This was actually an incorrect assessment, which later sadly resulted in destruction of own tanks. I wish credence had been given to our observation. To be sure we, then approached Chamb from the south and clearly observed two brick kilns on the south and south-east of it. The one on the right was almost on the river edge and the other was on the left of the road joining Munawar with Chamb. On reaching the top of them we saw huge stack of stores, ammunition boxes and other military equipment along with three or four 3-ton trucks and a tank in depression of the kiln. Further on the left I could see some recoilless anti-tank guns, very well camouflaged and facing our line of advance. We passed the information and wanted to engage them with artillery fire but were again

stopped because of the earlier wrong information. After some time as we were running low on fuel, we landed back, and I rushed to the headquarters to brief them about the actual situation ”

Major Rabbani's Marathon Aerial Shoot

Major Rabbani was the first flight commander who operated in Indian Held Kashmir during ‘Operation Gibraltar’ and later during ‘Operation Grand Slam’ as well. No. 6 Flight (ex- 2 Squadron), was based at Gujrat Airfield for night and in the day it operated from Bhimber Strip. With the launching of operation ‘Grand Slam’ this flight was the first to get committed in the actual operations. On 1st September 1965, during the Battle of Chamb, enemy guns were hindering the advance of own forces, Major Rabbani soon after his first mission was again tasked to locate these guns. He narrates:

“While going around I saw some Indian guns in action deployed in an island west of Tawi. The gun positions had a good crest due west and could only be seen from the south or while on top of it. Normal reaction would have been to go for the guns and silence them. But I decided to go first for the bivouac area and wagon lines. The aim was to capture the guns intact while making the enemy run; thus getting memorable war trophy, it might look strange today but forty years ago at the peak of my youth I had this idea. I called the artillery fire and while flying my L-19 in a pattern to avoid the enemy ground fire directed at me. In the bargain some vehicles exploded and apparently heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy. Then necessary fire correction was given, soon guns and the entire area became a scene of destruction and confusion. The sortie lasted for about three hours and I returned fully satisfied.”



Lt Col Sarfraz Rabbani SJ

1 Army Aviation Squadron War Diary records. “Earlier in the day Major Rabbani who was commanding No.6 Flight, took a very successful artillery shoot. Just east of Chamb on the western bank of Munawar Tawi, where he saw a concentration of enemy vehicles. Major Rabbani thus over rode caution and flew over head the guns and directed own fire to an extent that not only the guns were silenced but enemy fled leaving behind 14 guns just 1 mile north of Chamb. It later transpired that it was the wagon line of the enemy guns operating west of Munawar Tawi.”

Major Rabbani was later decorated with Sitara-i-Jur'at for this action. He rose to Lieutenant Colonel's rank and commanded 2 and 3 Army Aviation Squadrons.

Colonel Babar Bags 55 Sikhs

Lieutenant Colonel Naseer Ullah Babar, Commanding Officer 3 Squadron on the same very day had flown towards the Kashmir Sector. He recalls (at Peshawar in 2004):

OH-13S taking off during the 1965 War



Casualty Evacuation in OH-13S

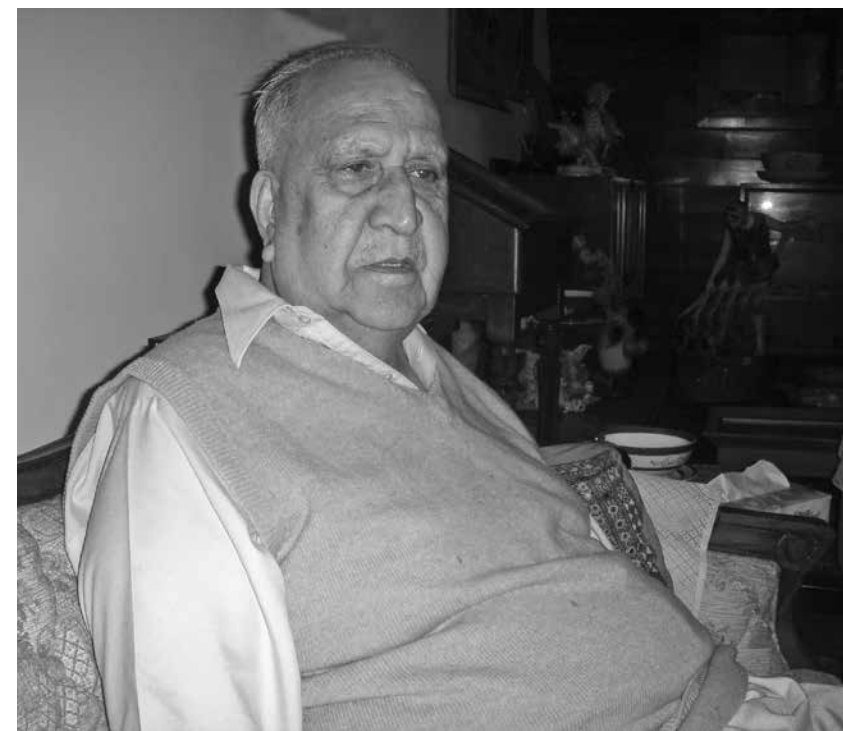


“On 1st September 1965, as per recent pattern, I took Brigadier Ishaq the Sector Commander from Rawalpindi to Murree and onwards to Rawalakot. These were the initial days of helicopter flying thus currency and check-outs for mountain flying were also amalgamated into operational flying. I had three pilots in the other OH-13. On arrival at Murree, I learnt that Chamb had been attacked and our forces were outside Chamb. On reaching Rawalakot, we heard the same news and kept hearing so while we were there till about mid-day. On completion of his work, I suggested to Brigadier Ishaq that we should visit Chamb and see what the impediment was. Brigadier Ishaq readily agreed and we departed for the brigade headquarters at Bhimber. On arrival, we heard the same news vis-à-vis Chamb. After a quick lunch we decided to make best use of the available hours and departed for Chamb. We were totally unprepared as we neither had weapons nor quarter inch maps. In order to ascertain the general direction of Chamb, in the absence of maps, we landed in the gun area, in Padhar Nullah. Brigadier Ishaq decided to go back and did so in the OH-13, now we were three pilots (myself, Major Latif Awan and Captain Akram) in the helicopter.

After having ascertained the general direction we took off for Chamb. It was getting late afternoon. Soon we saw a post and I asked Major Latif Awan to land near it. Being an avid collector, the intent was to pick up a couple of weapons, from what we perceived was an abandoned post. Major Awan told me that it was getting late and we should indulge in the weapon picking later after our return from the forward area. While we were flying, we learnt on radio set ARC-44, that brigade commander, Brigadier (lieutenant general retired) Abdul Hamid Khan had been ambushed. I began to get in touch with the ground troops and asked them to direct the helicopter, if they could see it, so that we could pick up the brigade commander. We flew in this manner for some time but failed to get any correct information about the location of the ambushed brigade commander, further the information about the ambush itself was confusing on the radio thus we decided to head back.

It was then that I saw the post again and told Awan to land. Since I was busy in conversation on radio with the ground troops, I did not see any personnel in the post. However, Major Awan informed me that there are apparently some men. Presuming they must be dead/wounded, I asked him to land and on touching down I got out of the helicopter along with Captain Akram and marched towards the post. As we got closer it dawned that it is a light machine gun out post. There were three Sikhs inside who were bewildered.

Had the Sikhs just pressed the trigger the story would have ended there. Why they failed was directly related to their low morale which had sapped their will to fight and what little they had was overawed by the helicopter and my uniform. I seldom flew in coverall and my Peak-Cap and stick must have been the last nail on the Sikhs imagination. It was no more ‘souvenir hunting’ now it was a matter of our survival. In a flash many thoughts occurred to me, the most paramount was the safety of my officers and helicopter. I had been at Dehra Dun where some of my best friends were Sikh officers, so I asked him in Punjabi about Colonel Sukhwant Singh



Major General Naseer Ullah Babar SJ Bar 2005 at Peshawar

which baffled the Sikhs. Before he could mentally assess the situation, I told him that your forces have surrendered and tribal lashkar is on its way, since I knew your Sikh officers and have served with First Sikh Battalion(a lie) therefore I have come to take surrender, thus ensuring your safety.

One Sikh soldier told me about large number of people in the Main Post, which was few hundred yards in the rear. By that time few Sikh soldiers from the Main Post all brandishing new rifles, some still having chindi in the muzzle, led by a Junior Commissioned Officer, joined in with quizzical looks towards the helicopter still with running rotors. Hats off to Captain Akram for keeping his nerves, he walked among these Sikhs as a conqueror. At that moment, I saw two Indian fighter aircraft heading towards the post (possibly having sighted the helicopter), they were coming in to attack. They made a pass over so as to align themselves for an attack. I immediately indicated to Major Awan about air threat and that he should take off. He did so just when the IAF aircraft were coming in for an attack. Simultaneously, some PAF Sabers also appeared on the scene. I knew that on the outcome of this dogfight rests the fate of myself and Captain Akram. Both the Indian aircraft were shot, the debris fell near the post. That sealed the fate of the Sikhs, had the result been other way around, I am sure they would have shot us then and there.

Keeping my nerves, I walked towards the Main Post led by the Sikhs through the minefield. Once inside the post I was informed that they had received some shelling in the morning and two jawans have been wounded (then dead) and their company commander, Major Nagi had left them in the morning on pretext of getting supplies. I then realized that it was a Company Post of 5 Sikh Light Infantry with heavy weapons like 106 millimeters recoilless rifle, a mortar and medium machine gun detachment from a support battalion (pattern in Indian Army). I asked them to place their weapons on the parapet and move out and kept pushing them, Captain Akram was of a great help in all this happening.”

“Once they were out I asked the Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) to “fall them in,” he did so. I then asked two jawans to carry a rifle each. I told Captain Akram to take the wounded soldiers towards own area and also to inform and seek help from own formation, he was reluctant to leave me alone, but did as told.”

Rest of the Sikh Company was made to march under their own escorts with Lieutenant Colonel Babar in the rear pushing them. Meanwhile Captain Akram marched and after few miles came across own advancing troops, to whom he told all that had happened and got a jeep for the wounded prisoners. In the jeep still worried about his commanding officer, he inquired from the Sikhs, “Would your comrades dare to shoot my commanding officer?” The answer was a cheerful ‘No’.

By now it was near nightfall, Lieutenant Colonel Babar further narrates, “Enroute, I met Major (major general retired) Abdullah Saeed and asked him to relieve me of the burden, he refused. Moving on I met Major (lieutenant general retired) Faiz Ali Chishti, 2nd in Command of an artillery unit, I asked him for transport, he refused as they were re-deploying. We moved on and at nightfall reached Moel Post, there I informed them of the event and also asked them for some tea for the Prisoners of War and also informed Kharian (where Major Latif Awan had proceeded) that I was safe.

After tea and in the dark (blessed it was the full moon) we moved towards Padhar. On arrival at Padhar (Corps Artillery Mess) at 2000 hours, I asked the POWs to sit in the volleyball ground and informed them that I was proceeding for dinner and that they would get their meal at Bhimber. When



Lt Col (Maj Gen) Naseer Ullah Babar CO 3 Army Aviation Squadron

General Musa Khan Commander-in-Chief

Lt Gen Bakhfiar Rana
Commander 1 Corps

Captain (Maj Gen) Zafar Askree with Armoured Officers
during Operation Grand Slam



I entered the mess and informed Brigadier Amjad Chaudhry, (Commander Corps Artillery) and his staff, they did not believe me and came out to see for themselves. After a quick dinner, I requested for transport as by now I was fairly tired having walked for 7-8 miles or more. I was once again refused and was informed that the vehicles would be free once the bridging equipment had been delivered at Tawi. At about 0230 hours, I was provided the transport and some munching for POWs, after which I asked them (POWs) to demonstrate their battalion embussing drill. They did so in exemplary fashion and we left for Bhimber.

At about 0500 hours, we arrived at Bhimber and the panic started about escorts/guard for the Sikhs prisoners. However, I handed them over to the brigade headquarters, after assuring them that I would look after their interest. I was picked up at 1000 hours, along with the souvenirs (two G-3 rifles) and returned to Dhamial to receive a dressing down from Colonel A.B Awan for having involved myself in the venture.”

When the POWs were interrogated, they narrated the incident. Late General Riaz Hussain (the then Director General ISI) informed President Ayub Khan at a briefing in the evening on 2nd September 1965 and sought his permission to publish the item in the newspapers as it would raise morale of our troops. Resultantly, it was published in all newspapers on 4th September 1965. On same very day Lieutenant Colonel Babar was at Kharian Strip to take General Musa, who had arrived in the L-23 from Rawalpindi, onward to forward area. General Musa asked him if he had seen the day’s newspapers.

Colonel Babar further narrates: I said, “No” and he asked me to get the newspapers from his L-23 aircraft. The newspapers carried the story. General Bakhtiar Rana gave me a dressing down that the army has spent so much money on my training and I was involving myself in such frivolous activity. I was awarded Sitara-e-Jur’at for this action.”

First Air Battle

Air Marshal Nur Khan, C-in-C PAF, arrived at Gujrat Airfield in a PAF aircraft. He was flown in an L-19 to the forward line of troops near Chamb. As soon as he landed back at Gujrat, the first ever dogfight between the IAF and the PAF aircraft started. (The one described by Lieutenant Colonel Babar). At about 1600 hours on 1st September 1965, four enemy aircraft appeared and started attacking our ground troops. As these aircraft were in their attack runs, our fighters picked them up. Within a very short span of time all the four Indian aircraft were shot down. The thrilling encounter of the First Air Battle, was witnessed from an L-19 by Air Marshal Nur Khan, the C-in-C of PAF and Lieutenant Colonel MM Mahmud. Later Captain Askree, the pilot of OH-13 helicopter landed at one of the sites of the crash and picked up a piece of the wreckage. It was the insignia of the IAF. This was kept as a War Trophy.

2nd September 1965

The operations in Chamb Sector were launched on 1st September 1965. By the afternoon the leading elements had reached Chamb. By the morning of 2nd September 1965, Chamb was captured, River Tawi was crossed and the enemy positions at Troti Feature and other resistant pockets were under attack.

General Musa, along with Major General A.A. Bilgrami arrived at Kharian. They were picked up by helicopters and brought to the tactical command post of 102 Brigade. Major General Yahya, General Officer Commanding 7 Division, was also there. As per original planning but much against his wishes Major General Akhtar Malik, was to hand over the command of the operation to Major General Yahya and re-assume command of his own 12 Division. Initially efforts failed to locate Major General Akhtar Malik and it was not feasible to pass him the orders on telephone. Captain Mir Saadat Ullah was personally briefed by General Musa and was given a sealed envelope to be handed over to Major General Malik personally. Captain Saadat's only query from the C-in-C was regarding the disposal of the envelope in case of being shot down by the enemy. Captain Saadat landed the envelope at the designated area in L-19 amidst enemy fire. Later Major General Yahya, hurriedly held his 'O'(Orders) Group and gave orders to attack Troti Feature on first light of 4th September 1965.

By last light 2nd September 1 Army Aviation Squadron Headquarters, No. 2 and No.6 Flights were concentrated at Gujrat Airfield. A strip was marked on the taxi track with night landing facilities. These two flights were to operate during daylight from field strips in support of 7 Division and 4 Corps Artillery respectively and to fall back at Gujrat. Next day a strip was prepared after quite an effort in the north west of Jalalpur, to support 7 Division, Captain Mir Saadat Ullah and Captain Zafar Aqeel manned it, skeleton squadron headquarters was also shifted there.

3rd September 1965- Move of 2 Army Aviation Squadron

In the morning C-in-C arrived again and was taken to the tactical headquarters at Chamb. The long awaited Warning Orders came around mid-day for the move of 2 Army Aviation Squadron. It was Major Muhammad Ayub who rang up the adjutant and directed him to move one flight and the squadron headquarters as soon as possible. At 1445 hours 3rd September 1965, the ground party consisting of the squadron headquarters elements, No.7 Flight and the maintenance platoon from 199 Aviation Engineering Battalion left the Dhamial Base in a convoy, led by Captain Jamil of 199 Aviation Engineering Battalion, he had been attached as a maintenance officer. Air Party comprised of three officers and two aircraft. Major Muhammad Akhtar, the 2nd in command was the incharge of the air party while Captains Jamil Akhtar Khalid and Muazzam Ali Shah were the other officers to follow. The Air Party landed at Kharian Strip approximately at 1900 hours. Major Mansoor Ahmad Sial was at the strip to receive them. At 2030 hours 3rd September 1965, the ground party also reached Kharian and soon the camp was established. Following helicopter pilots from **3 Army Aviation Squadron** were placed under command 2 Army Aviation Squadron:-

Helicopter No.	Pilot
135	Captain Siraj
139	Captain Manzoor Bajwa
132	Captain Sajjad Nazim

Captain Khalid Saeed Neutralises an Enemy Artillery Regiment

Towards the evening of 3rd September when the advance of own troops towards Jaurian was held up due to heavy enemy artillery fire, Headquarters 4 Corps Artillery gave Captain Khalid Saeed the mission to locate these guns. He observed that the fire was coming from a nullah near Kalit.

Immediately own guns were directed onto this area. After the ranging was complete and the 'fire for effect' was being ordered, a doubt arose in the minds of the staff of Headquarters 4 Corps Artillery. They somehow maintained that the reference being given by the pilot is incorrect. Own troops, as believed by them, had already crossed that line. But Captain Khalid Saeed still maintained that the fire which was holding the advance of own troops, was coming from that area.

To resolve the controversy Captain Khalid Saeed decided to fly to the area again to reconfirm as to whether they were the hostile guns or not? As he approached the area, he came under heavy enemy ground fire. A few bullets hit the left fuel tank of L-19 aircraft No. 57-5986, petrol gushed into the cockpit. Still unperturbed Captain Khalid Saeed, remained cool and calm despite risk of the aircraft catching fire. With singleness of purposes he called for 'fire for effect'. With most accurate observation of fire hostile guns were not only silenced but later the enemy fled, leaving guns behind. By the time pilot finished the shoot it became dark and he made emergency night landing at Gujrat Air Strip where arrangements had been made earlier. 1 Army Aviation Squadron, War Diary records this shoot in following words ``Captain Saeed set a pattern which was soon to become the by words for the squadron and adopted as the spirit in which all pilots operated later throughout the war``. The Squadron observers role was complimented upon by Brigadier Chaudhry, Commander 4 Corps Artillery. He remarked that "As long as a Pakistan Army Pilot is up in the air, the enemy guns would stay silent."

4th September 1965-Army Aviation and Push towards Akhnur

Lieutenant Colonel Mahmud Commanding Officer 1 Army Aviation Squadron narrates: "Early morning of 4th September, Major General Yahya GOC 7 Division, flew with me and Captain Askree to Chamb and landed at the helipad. There Brigadier Amjad Chaudhry, Commander Corps Artillery, briefed him about the Artillery Fire Plan and since its lifting, no attack by own ground troops was launched. Major General Yahya was totally surprised at this. Brigadier Chaudhry suggested that aircraft should go up to see the effect of own fire over enemy positions and report if any movement was observed. I suggested that myself and Captain Askree would go forward and carryout a detailed aerial assessment of the situation.

Captain Askree and myself first landed near 3 Frontier Force Regiment just short of Troti Feature. I met Major Anwar-ul-Haq (N.D), the second in command of the battalion. He told me that the attack did not proceed as the 'A' Echelon of the battalion had lost its contact with the battalion headquarters. We next visited Brigadier Azmat, Brigade Commander 10 Brigade. He explained that one of his Punjab Battalion, which was advancing along the river had

lost its contact with the brigade headquarters and as such was not in a position to advance further. On the other side of Troti, we met Lieutenant Colonel Sher, Commanding Officer 13 Lancers. The tanks were lined up in a nullah and were not proceeding forward as there was fire coming from the Troti Feature. Further on to the left flank, we reached the headquarters of Brigadier Zafar Ali Shah. It was the same story of them showing their helplessness to start the advance. We told them that we had just flown over and around the Troti Feature, own artillery fire had already caused enormous damage and we further explained to them that small pockets of enemy are all that is still holding on.

We returned to the helipad at Chamb. Major General Yahya was anxiously waiting there and inquired about the situation. I briefed him about the position on the ground. We later flew out and met all the unit/formation commanders. In his typical style General Yahya told them that rather than attacking Troti and other pockets of resistance they should by pass those. From the right, Brigadier Azmat was ordered to by pass these positions through the gap from Troti and River Chenab. Brigadier Zafar Ali Shah was to by pass from the enemy left flank. Both brigades were ordered that after by passing Troti they should gallop towards Akhnur. Within a few hours Troti and other pockets were by passed and troops started their advance to Akhnur. By the time the troops reached the foot hills of Akhnur , it was dark and the L-19s could not support the efforts of the ground troops any more. The infantry units that reached there, after the full day's advance, were handicapped in carrying out aggressive patrolling. They stayed short of the foot hills of Akhnur”.

5th September 1965-Capture of Jaurian

Jaurian fell due to Pakistani assault launched at 0700 hours on 5th September 1965. With moving of 7 Division Headquarters to area Munawar, No. 2 Flight(1 Squadron) also moved forward. Since own forces had moved as far forward as Jaurian, own aircraft also started operating much beyond Jaurian, in fact in certain cases Akhnur was over flown. On the evening of 5th September 1965 Pakistan Army was only 4 miles short of Akhnur. After the fall of Jaurian, Major Akhtar flew Lieutenant General Rana from Kharian to Lahore. From Lahore he(General Rana) was taken by a helicopter to the forward areas.

17 Days of September 1965

Casus Belli

At 0300 hours on 6th September Indians delivered a riposte and launched attack across the international border towards Lahore. Indian aim was to divert our focus from Akhnur and make Pakistan react to this new situation. This move was not a surprise. Indian attack on 6th September, was well anticipated by our higher headquarters. 1 Corps had already informed formations under its command to be prepared to deploy at short notice, troops were deployed by first light 2nd September. 15 Division was already ordered to take up defensive positions on 3rd September. The events of last 9 months had prepared Pakistan for such eventuality.

Formation of L-19 of 2 Squadron during 1965 War



OH-13S during the 1965 War



Pakistan Army Dispositions

On the eve of war Pakistan Army was commanded by General Musa Khan

1 Corps (Army had only one corps at that time)

Corps Headquarters at Gujranwala	Lieutenant General Bakhtiar Rana
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7 Division at Jallalpur.	Major General Yahya Khan
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15 Division at Sialkot.	Brigadier Ismail (Later Major General Tikka)
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6 Armoured Division at Daska.	Major General Abrar Hussain
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(It had only one armoured brigade)

General Headquarters Formations

11 Division at Kasur.	Major General Hamid
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10 Division at Lahore.	Major General Sarfraz
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12 Division at Murree	Major General Akhtar Ali Malik
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1 st Armoured Division at Raiwind.	Major General Nasir
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18 Division in Sind.	Major General Azhar
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4 Corps Artillery.	Brigadier Amjad
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Army Aviation Assets

Army Aviation at that stage consisted of Dhamial Base Headquarters and three squadrons - 1, 2 & 3 Army Aviation Squadrons. The entire Army Aviation had an integrated maintenance & logistic support, consisting of 199 Aviation Electrical Mechanical Engineers Battalion, and an Ordnance Depot. Colonel A B Awan was commanding the Dhamial Base, in the last days of the war, he was posted to command an Artillery Brigade and was replaced by Colonel Jabbar. In the General Headquarters Lieutenant Colonel Saleem Ullah was the Principal Staff Officer on aviation matters, his General Staff Officer, Grade – 2, Major Wali was at Army Tactical Headquarters at Kharian. Additionally four Beaver aircraft were requisitioned from Plant Protection Department for war effort. On the onset of the war Army Aviation did not possess the capability of night operations, it also lacked the requisite communication sets to act as Forward Air Controller and neither it had any aerial fire power. All aviation resources to field formations were controlled by the Chief of General Staff (CGS). There were total of 63 pilots available including those performing staff work as well. Out of eighteen helicopters three helicopters were unserviceable and over forty L-19 were serviceable.

The positive aspect was that all the commanding officers and pilots had a long period of mutual understanding among each other. They all had bond of instructor-student relationship, they knew each other's weak and strong points. Thus there was a sense of harmony from top to bottom. In the end this proved to be the decisive factor.

Aviation Redeployment

With the Indian invasion of Pakistan on night 5/6 September 1965, the entire complexion changed resulting in fresh deployment of army aviation aircraft, in conjunction with the move of certain field formations.

1 Army Aviation Squadron, Lieutenant Colonel M.M. Mahmud

In support of 6, 7 and 15 Division. Under Command: No. 6 Flight ex-2 Army Aviation Squadron, and one flight of OH-13(S) helicopters ex- 3 Army Aviation Squadron. The squadron supported the operations in Sialkot Sector, its flights were located at Sialkot, Adamke, Pasrur and Gujrat. During the course of battle in this sector the flights shifted their locations. Company of 199 Electrical Mechanical Engineers Battalion was located at Sambrial to support the squadron.

2 Army Aviation Squadron, Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad Khan

In support of 1 Corps, 1 Armoured Division, 10 and 11 Divisions. Its No.6 Flight was later reverted from 1 Squadron. It also had one flight of helicopters under its command. Squadron moved from Kharian to Rahwali Strip at 1845 hours 6th September, next day at 0445 hours they flew to the football ground of Government High School Gujranwala. The airstrip was prepared on the night of 6th September concealed by high trees on both sides. The officers mess was located in a temple. Its flights were distributed as under:-



Lt Col Mohammad Khan



Lt Col M.M. Mahmud



Brig Jabbar

No.7 Flight. Major Taleh Mohammad Mian, got entrenched at Walton in support of 10 Division.

No.8 Flight. Major Mansoor Sial to support 11 Division at Lulliani. Two Sections with Captain Sheraz and Captain Hamid Chaudhry were sent to Sulemanki to support the operations there.

No.9 Flight. At Chander Airfield under command Major Hissam, consisting of Captain Zafar and Captain Nouman, was placed to support 1 Armoured Division.

Squadron Headquarters along with one composite flight consisting of three helicopters and two sections of L-19 at Gujranwala.

3 Army Aviation Squadron, Lieutenant Colonel Naseer Ullah Babar

The only Rotary Wing Squadron. Its two flights were detached to the Fixed Wing Squadrons, one flight remained at Dhamial to support the efforts in Azad Kashmir area.

199 Electrical & Mechanical Engineering Battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Saeed Qadir

One company was located at Sambrial, other at Gujranwala, few elements were also present at Gujrat, and Multan. A Forward Base was also established at Baghtanwala with Major Aftab and Major Burki.

Indian Army - Order of Battle

The Indian Army had eleven divisions and three independent brigades:-

Chief of Army Staff - General J.N. Chaudhry.

Western Command Lieutenant General Harbaksh Singh.

1 Corps Lieutenant General P.O. Dunn (Sialkot Sector).

1 Armoured Division, 14 Division, 16 Division and 26 Division,

XI Corps Lieutenant General J.S. Dhillon (Lahore Sector).

4 Mountain Division, 7-15 Infantry Division, and 2 Independent Armoured Brigade.

XV Corps Lieutenant General K.S. Khatoch (Kashmir Sector)

6 Mountain Division, 10 and 11 Infantry Division.

Reserves 19-25-26 Infantry Divisions, 68 Independent Infantry Brigade and 121 Independent Infantry Brigade.

Bird's Eye View of the War

The September War was mainly fought in Lahore-Kasur-Sialkot Sector with subsidiary efforts taking place in Sulemanki and Kashmir Sectors. Kashmir remained relatively calm with fighting going on for passes and posts in a prolonged time frame. War had three distinct phases:

Phase 1 (6-8 September 1965). Indian XI Corps mounted three-pronged offensive on a 50 miles front in Lahore - Kasur Sector. Indian 15, 7 and 4 Division launched the attacks, which were all blunted by our 10 and 11 Divisions. Indians also launched simultaneous attack towards Sialkot Sector. Own forces remained in defensive posture and some bold actions coupled with luck ensured that Indian attack should run out of the steam after 48 hours. Own 105 Brigade launched attack and captured Indian posts in Suleimanke Sector.

Phase 2 (8-12 September 1965). Pakistan riposte with the rolling off of 1st Armoured Division poised for Amritsar. Its initial success was heartening. However, Indians responded by employing elements of their strike force, the 1st Armoured Division in the Sialkot Sector, where own 15 Division and 6 Armoured Division (two tank regiments) held the fort, at times outcome hanging by thread.

Phase 3 (13-17 September 1965). Fierce tank battles raged in Philloura - Chawinda area. The attacker (Indian Forces) throwing in every thing and the defender (Pakistani Forces) holding on to every inch. Own 1st Armoured Division was also rushed in, from Kasur Sector. In the dying moments of the war, Indians made moves to recapture lost territories in Kasur, Sulemanki and desert area without success.

Kashmir Sector

On the night of 5th September 1965, Major Tirmizi (retired as Director Aviation) being a neighbour of Lieutenant Colonel Naseer Ullah Babar, got a chit as per routine of last few days, that he had to go to Jura Sector for casualty evacuation. There were 8-10 casualties and three helicopters were detailed. Next morning Major Tirmizi took off with Captains Sagheer and Zia Ud Din Javeed in helicopters No. 144, 142 and 143. They carried out refuelling at Muzzaffarabad. On reaching Jura (Titwal Sector) they found that instead of 8 casualties they had to evacuate more than 20. It was at Muzzaffarabad that Major Tirmizi got the news that India had attacked Lahore, now it was an all out war.

Brigadier Tirmizi recalls almost 38 years later, “I briefed Captain Sagheer on the situation and decided to fly low and on the home bank. To get the casualties from Jura, pilots had to initially fly along the Kishen Ganga upto Danni, and then steep climb to 9,500 feet so as to cross Chunj Feature. On the far side, pilots were required to rapidly descend down in area Choa Ghali as the height of Jura is only 4000 feet. For the return journey with a full load of two litters, pilots had to execute two 360 degrees turns to attain the necessary height, these turns are in full view of Sanjoi Feature and Mirpur Ridge with enemy observing. In the end pilots evacuated all casualties despite coming under enemy fire”.

On 7th September Captain Akram and Captain Naeem flew to Rawalakot in helicopters No. 142 and 143, they evacuated 8 casualties. To ensure maximum utilization they also carried 400 pounds of rations for the posts. Similar missions were also flown on 8th and 9th September. On 9th, Captain Akram evacuated 6 casualties from Palangi, in order to reach the area from Bagh pilot had to cross



Toli Pir Feature 8,000 feet high and then descend down in full view of the enemy position, but Captain Akram evacuated the casualties right through the fire. On 16th September Colonel A B Awan was posted to command Artillery 12 Division for likely offensive, he was dropped at Murree in a helicopter, his subsequent reconnaissance of the area along with other commanders was facilitated by the 3 Army Aviation Squadron pilots. On 22nd September major casualty evacuation missions were carried out involving three OH 13(S), crew included Captain Akram, Major Awan and Captain Sagheer. Aviators evacuated 12 casualties from Badhal, in view of the conditions of patients they were brought to Rawalpindi Combined Military Hospital despite having low fuel warning. On 23rd September, the last day of the war, Captain Sagheer and Major Awan were involved in the operation in area Badhal and Palanghi in 2 Sector (AK). This last mission was carried out in the face of enemy's small arms fire.

Lahore-Kasur Sector

Captain Sirajuddin of 3 Army Aviation Squadron flew General Rana, the Corps Commander from Gujranwala to Lahore and then to Kasur on the evening(1600 hours) of 6th September, in OH-13(S) helicopter. This allowed the commander to have first hand knowledge of the situation. Pilot flew low from Lahore to Kasur, the General wanted to fly as close to the forward lines as possible. Visibility was not that clear, however they could see the smoke and fire enroute. Pilot recalls, "My main concern was own artillery fire. We were not in communication with the ground troops, further more in case of crash it would have been a great loss to lose the commander so early. He was carrying important documents including the Corps Operational Instructions." They landed safely at Kasur.

2 Army Aviation Squadron's flight under Major Taleh Mian was at Walton Airfield. Divisional Headquarters were in the out skirts of Lahore. On the very first day, Air OPs were to concentrate observation in area Rampur for which they were also provided with quarter inch scale map sheets. Flying was conducted at low level. On 7th September, Major Taleh Mian and Captain Jawahar were chased by the Indian aircraft. Next day Captain Ishaq faced the same scenario. For coming days pattern remained the same. For Artillery shoots pilots had to carry extra radio set for communicating with the guns. Aviators daily had to go to respective HQs for briefing and debriefing, it was a time consuming exercise. Aviation efforts were tasked by the respective Colonel Staffs.

Aviation Support to 105 Infantry Brigade

This brigade was located at Haveli and was assigned to look after the Suleimanke Head Works. The very first attack of the war on Indians was launched by this Brigade at 1830 hours on **6th September**, spearheaded by 10 Punjab and 4 Punjab supported by 32 Medium Regiment. By 1850 hours Sadiqia and Jhanger Posts were captured. On 8th September at 1020 hours brigade requested Military Operation Directorate for an Air OP Flight.

On 9th morning Captain Hamid Choudhry arrived from Lahore with his L-19 and established strip in Okara Military Dairy Farms area. On 10th September according to Brigade War Diary, they received a message from GHQ; "Use L-19 in your own area, keeping in view its limitation. No unnecessary

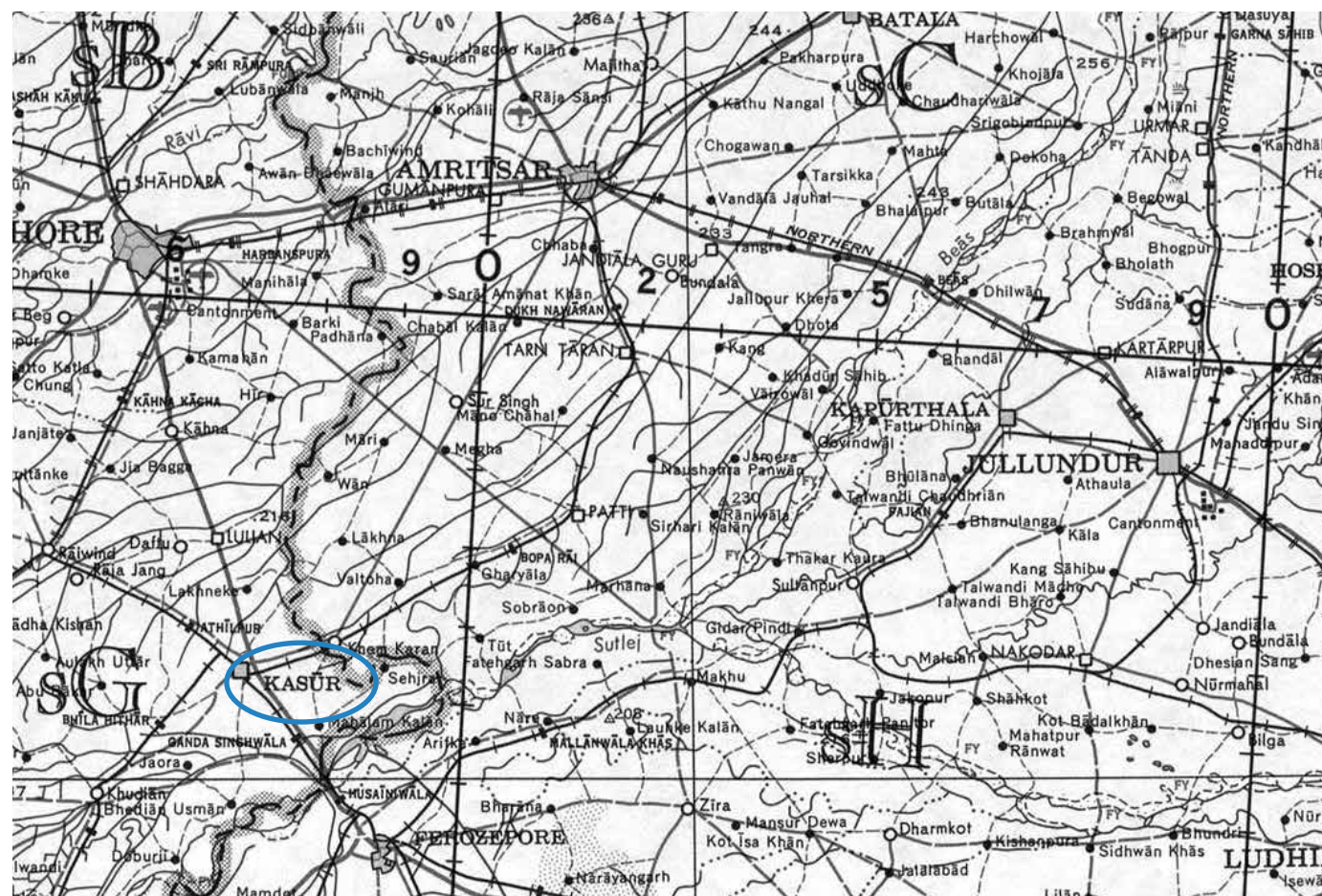
risk.” On 14th September Captain Khalid Kamal (KK) also joined in with another L-19. Both the pilots carried out aerial surveillance and took artillery shoots. They used air bursts as well to disperse enemy infantry hiding in village. Both pilots along with maintenance crew remained at Haveli Strip till 4th October 1965.

Mailed Fist

One flight of 2 Army Aviation Squadron was in support of 1st Armoured Division. One of the best kept secrets of the war, was the location of this Mailed Fist. Captain Zafar (later brigadier retired) writes, “On the evening of 6th September, Major Hissam, and my self were ordered to move to Chander Airfield, in support of 1st Armoured Division. When we arrived there from Kharian in our L-19s, there was no one there except few scattered logistic elements. We again flew in search of division, to the place we were told by the staff officers. We could not locate it and came back to Chander; here we spent the night in open with our aircraft. Next morning we were given the wake up call by the four low level Indian jets heading for Sargodha.

We hurriedly put our L-19s under trees, soon the Indians came back, I counted and they were two aircraft short, it raised our morale. We were stranded here at Chander with no communication and decided at our own to fly towards Changa Manga Forest, to locate the Armoured Division, it was not there, we remained in air for over three hours and finally landed back at Chander where we received a message to proceed to Walton.”

On 7th September 1965 own 11 Infantry Division launched attack for the capture of Khem Karan and Valtoha. 1st FF and 6 Lancers reached Khem Karan by last light. On 8th September, 6 Lancers captured Valtoha Railway Station and 24 Cavalry reached village Asal Uttar, later to fall back on orders to Leaguer at Khem Karan. In the afternoon of 8th September, Chief of the General Staff (CGS) Major General Sher Bahadur was flown from Kharian to Kasur by Captain Siraj in an OH-13. Captain Siraj had to make few landings



to facilitate the CGS for update from ground commanders. There were Indian jets in the air also. The ground formations were constantly moving and changing their positions thus it was an effort to locate the desired commanders, so fluid was the battle. At 2300 hours CGS and Major General Hameed flew back from Khem Karan to Luliani. It was Captain Siraj's first nocturnal cross-country mission. He writes, "Noise of the helicopter created a lot of fire works and illuminated the battle field area. The helicopter lights were switched off completely and the tracers fired eased navigation to the destination." The helicopter later went back to Lahore.

Battle of Asal Uttar

On **9th September 1965**, own Armoured Division initiated break-out across Rohi Nullah. Indians hastily occupied defensive positions around Asal Uttar & Cheema Village, the main hurdle in our thrust towards Amritsar. Advance Landing Ground (ALG) was established on the east of Rohi Nullah near Tactical Headquarters 11 Division.

Captain Ziauddin narrates: "On 9th September, myself and Major General Hamid played hide and seek with 4 Indian Hunters for nearly seven minutes. Indians were after the Bridgehead of 11 Infantry Division and 1st Armoured Division". Captain Asghar Aziz was also attached with 1st Armoured Division with his OH-13. On 9th September when the all-important battle across Rohi Nullah was about to take place he undertook route reconnaissance with Lieutenant Colonel Altaf Hussain of 1st Engineers Battalion for the leading 4 Brigade along Axis Rohi Nullah. They were almost seven miles ahead of own leading tanks when three Indian tanks astride the axis opened machine gun fire. During this sortie landings were made to check the soil and unattended Indian bridging equipment was also inspected. He further undertook a sortie with Brigadier Lumb for getting first hand information.

On the same day in the battle for Asal Uttar Village, it had been planned that 4 Armoured Brigade would out flank the Indian positions from the north west and then cut them off in the rear. 4 Cavalry led the advance but lost its way and was duly placed on the correct axis by Major General Naseer, GOC 1st Armoured Division, from the helicopter in which he was monitoring the advance. Early in the morning Major Hissam and Captain Raza flew towards Khem Karan. They saw own tanks crossing over Rohi Nullah and few getting bogged down.

Artillery 1st Armoured Division's War Diary records: "Divisional Artillery engaged targets called by Air OP, registration of some important targets was also carried by Air OP on the orders of the commander."

Indian Counter Attack

On the morning of **12th September 1965** major Indian counter attack towards Bridgehead came in full swing. The Air OPs were in the air. Their efforts were recorded by War Diary of 1st Armoured Division as under;

”Air OP had been flying reconnaissance missions since early morning. At 0800 hours, Air OP reported considerable vehicular traffic on Road Asal Uttar-Valtoha, targets were engaged with field and medium artillery guns.”

“At 0900 hours, some tanks were observed moving in general area Asal Uttar and were engaged by Air OP.” “At 1000 hours Air OP reported concentration of tanks and approximately one battalion plus of infantry in general area Asal Uttar, forming up for the attack. It was bombarded with 21 Medium Regiment. Visibility improved at 1100 hours, Air OP reported seeing 17 tanks(later reported to be considerably more) and numerous enemy dead in Mile Stone-36 and Mile Stone-38 area.”

Brigadier Zafar recalling above event narrates, ”Shoot was carried out for 2 hours and 30 minutes. Own artillery fire was very effective, damaging about 20 enemy vehicles some were carrying the fuel and ammunition, few were seen burning. Three tanks were also disabled. Enemy withdrew towards Valtoha.”

Capture of Lieutenant Colonel Anant Singh

On 12th September 1965 few troops of the Sikh Battalion had successfully infiltrated through our lines and were poised to encircle the 3 Self Propelled (3SP) Artillery Regiment’s guns area. As own Air OP was already monitoring the area thus pilots reported about the scattered movement of the enemy, eventually the Sikhs were hauled by a squadron of 15 Lancers, commanded by Major Mokeet and a battery of 3 SP. Later own helicopter being flown by Captain Zia along with Lieutenant Colonel Karim as observer were tasked to provide aerial escort. 1st Armoured Division War Diary records; “At 1100 hours Air OP reported battalion attack from the right flank, on guns area of 3 Self Propelled Regiment. The regiment was alerted and the enemy was surrounded and 136 POWs were captured including their Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Anant Singh”.

The Second Indian Wave

1st Armoured Division’s War Diary further records that epic day, “At 1500 hours, Air OP reported approximately a squadron of tanks and some infantry in Mile Stone-36. General Officer Commanding was informed about



OH 13S landing at the Field during the 1965 War

this. Target was engaged and dispersed. Intercepted enemy wireless indicates that the H-Hour was disrupted due to Air OP”. “At 1700 hours Air OP again pointed out the tank squadron and infantry advancing towards Mile Stone-27 from Mile Stone-36. Air OP now reports advance of two more squadrons of tanks and some infantry in Mile Stone-36 area. At once guns put down heavy concentration of fire controlled by Air OP, wireless intercept revealed that enemy infantry was unwilling to resume the advance.”

The Indian attack which had fizzled out on 12th September 1965 still carried on till 14th September. On 13th September according to Captain Zafar. “Whole day we carried out battlefield surveillance by then perhaps it was decided to halt the operations in this sector. On 14th morning our original flight of Major Hissam, Captain Nouman, Captain Khalid Kamal and myself, was ordered to move back to Gujranwala and join 2 Army Aviation Squadron. Whereas Lieutenant Colonel M M Karim with 2 Squadron’s Flight consisting of Major Taleh Mian, Captain Ishaq and Captain Ali Jawahar stayed back at Lahore to support 11 Division”.

11 Division’s War Diary

11 Division Artillery was coordinating the flying of 2 Army Aviation Squadron, its War Diary reveals;

“On the night of 13/14 September 11 Division Artillery ordered first light Air OP sorties to observe enemy movement around Hussainiwala Headworks. At 1530 hours 11 Division’s Operations Room was informed that large forward movement of vehicles was reported from Bhikkiwind – Khem Karan Bridge. Air OP was tasked to carry out surveillance at once of these areas.”

“At 0830 hours on 16th September enemy radar at Ferozepur Landing Ground became active, Air OP was sent and the radar was engaged with 35 Heavy Artillery Regiment.”

“At 1030 hours on 16th September enemy moved his tanks from direction of Ghawind Jhaman towards BRB, four Sherman tanks got bogged down, Air OP engaged and two tanks were destroyed.”

“At 0830 hours on 18th September - “Air OP engaged concentration of enemy tanks and vehicles on track Ghawind-Jhaman, one tank was seen burning.”

“On 21st September Air OP carried, observed shooting of enemy tanks and soft vehicles in area Rajoke and Wan.”

Sialkot Sector

On the first light of 6th September 1965 Commanding Officer 1 Army Aviation Squadron Lieutenant Colonel Mian Mahmood, who had stayed the night at the Headquarters 7 Division at Chak Pandit where his No. 2 Flight was supporting the 7 Division operations, was going to the mess to have his breakfast, when General Officer Commanding 7 Division Major General Yahya Khan came rushing out of his caravan. On seeing him, Major General Yahya told him that the C-in-C General Musa was on the line a short while ago. He (General Musa) had just told me the Indians have attacked Pakistan across the International Border. The attack had come at the Jassar Bridge, Burki and Kasur Sector. GOC further told that C-in-C had informed him that the enemy had captured Jassar Bridge. Before deciding to rush in some reinforcements or to organize a full-fledged counter attack, a clarification was very much needed. Lieutenant Colonel M M Mahmud flew back to his squadron headquarters at Lakhnwal in helicopter, which was under enemy air attack.

1 Army Aviation Squadron Readjusts

On the same very day (i.e. 6th September) Major Latif the No. 1 Flight commander of 1 Squadron at Dhamial, was told to proceed to Sialkot. No. 3 Flight of 1 Army Aviation Squadron commanded by Major Hissam was ordered to report to 2 Army Aviation Squadron at Kharian in lieu of No. 6 Flight which was under command 1 Squadron, they were also told to leave two aircraft (piloted by Captain Anwar and Lieutenant Qasim) at Bhimber in support of No. 4 Sector. No. 6 Flight was initially moved to Gujrat and then to Adamke on Daska-Sambrial Road to support 4 Corps Artillery and 6 Armoured Division.

Jassar Bridge

Lieutenant Colonel M M Mahmud along with his second-in-command, Major Nazir and adjutant, Captain Khalid Kamal immediately took off to confirm news about Jassar Bridge. Short of Jassar, adjutant was told to land at Sialkot for latest update from Headquarters 15 Division. Commanding officer and second-in-command flew over the Jassar Bridge, they flew low to clearly see the fighting taking place across the bridge, beyond our enclave on the Indian side of the bridge. They flew over the positions of own 115 Brigade. The close aerial view gave a very re-assuring picture. The bridge was intact and in firm control of own brigade. Later this news was conveyed to General Officer Commanding 15 Division, Brigadier Ismail and Colonel Staff 15 Division, Colonel Mehdi after landing at Sialkot.

Inside Tactical Headquarters 7 Division at Chak Pandit, Major General Yahya was waiting very anxiously for the news. When informed that his appreciation of own strength at Jassar was correct and that the bridge was intact, he very excitedly exclaimed, “Did not I tell you that?” He further informed that he as General Officer Commanding 15 Division had walked the entire area on foot and conceived and planned the defensive plan of the area to the minutest details. Emphatically he explained that the logical line of the enemy attack would be on Charwa-Chobara-Phillorah-Chawinda Axis.

It was further revealed that on 5th September a Despatch Rider(DR) of the enemy was captured by 15 Division. In the mail being carried by the DR, there were some letters addressed to the Indian 1st Armoured Division. Colonel Staff gave some important letters and documents in support of it to the Commanding Officer 1 Army Aviation Squadron and asked him to fly these to General Headquarters. It was done promptly. General Headquarters now had the information on 6th September that Indian 1st Armoured Division was in the area Samba. But there were some apprehensions, lest it was a ploy.

24 Brigade along with 25 Cavalry had been positioned in area Charwa as part of the defensive plan of 15 Division. They were the committed reserves of the division. But because of the conflicting and confusing picture emerging at Jassar, by the evening of 6th September, 24 Brigade minus 3 Frontier Force Regiment(FF) and 25 Cavalry had been ordered to move to the area Jassar for any possible counter attack. The sensitive corridor of Maharajke-Charwa-Chobara had been denuded of troops.

On the night of 6-7 September 1965, enemy moved in this sector, the entire area which was the defensive position of 24 Brigade Group, was held by 3 FF Regiment. 1 Army Aviation Squadron's War Diary records, " 7 September 1965. No. 2 Flight was reporting increasing enemy activity in area Charwa-Chobara. Indians having captured a firm base in area Charwa, had now broken through, with armoured formations." "24 Brigade Group had been moved towards Jassar the previous evening. The whole sector right from Phillaura-Chawinda-Pasrur had practically no troops, situation most confusing, enemy out of reach of our guns."

There was not much of activity in the way of adjustment of artillery fire. This was essentially because the units of 4 Corps Artillery kept shuttling between Pasrur and Narowal in response to the confusing picture at Jassar.

Maharajke-Sialkot Axis

On the evening of 7th September, 15 Division asked for a sortie of the L-19 aircraft along the International Border. Orders were given that without crossing the boundary the area across the Indian side should be observed. The Army Aviator was to specifically look for any major concentration and movement of the enemy in the area. Captain Niazi was detailed on this mission. He flew all along the boundary from Sialkot all the way to River Chenab. He noticed no movement or concentration of the enemy. He went to Headquarters 15 Division and briefed Colonel Staff, Colonel Mehdi. At mid night 7th September a call came from Headquarters 15 Division, Colonel Mehdi told commanding officer 1 Army Aviation Squadron that enemy had launched its attack. The main axis was Gadgor-Charwa-Chobara-Phillarauh.

Commanding Officer detailed Captain Niazi to fly on first light 8th September to confirm this news. He was also told to observe the strength and the direction of the enemy attack. Captain Niazi again flew along the boundary from Sialkot to River Chenab. He noticed no movement or concentration of the enemy. Pilot recalls "I crossed the border about 10 miles deep into the Indian territory but still could not locate any enemy armour. Must say they were well camouflaged." On his way back, ground controller warned him that Indian fighter aircraft were crossing back into India from the same direction. He was flying at 100 feet above ground level. Pilot narrates "The next moment these were over me. To escape, I pushed my aircraft towards the ground. As I

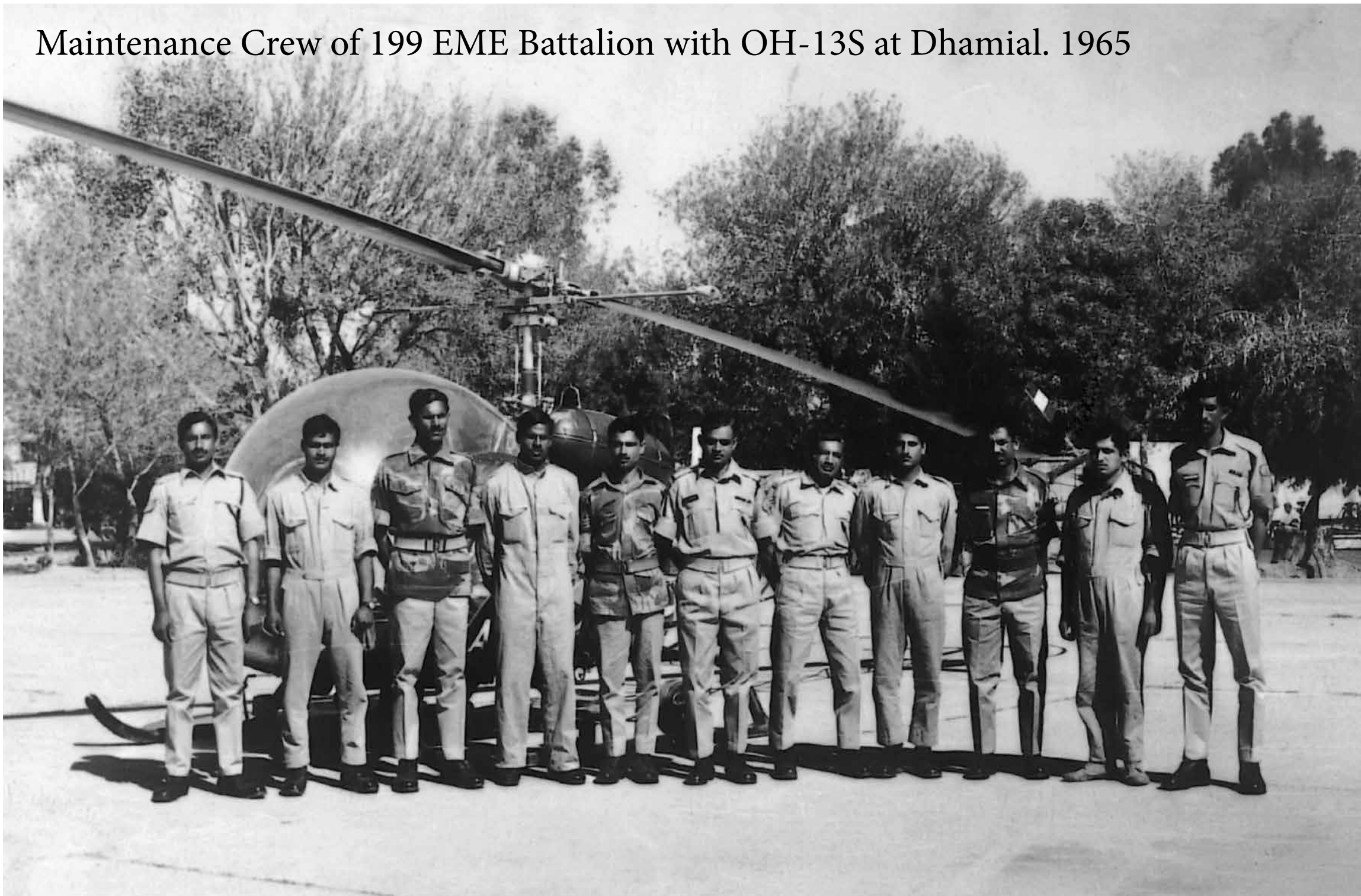
had gone into nose dive my controls became ineffective. The earth was fast coming towards me and I prayed, “Oh God! Don’t let me die a useless death, I have yet not seen any action?” Sure! Allah heard it and responded; the nose of the aircraft picked up a little and he made a smooth half loop at tree top level. That was his first brush with death and both made friends. Captain Niazi did not abandon the task given to him. He again flew to area Maharajke where he noticed an enemy column of tanks moving towards Sialkot, on the track Maharajke - Sialkot. He saw the leading tank reach the vicinity of Aik Nadi near Faizabad. Major General (retired) Niazi SJ writes; “I was on the reconnaissance mission and I saw 15-16 tanks moving from Charwa towards Sialkot. For positive identification I flew low over these tanks. These tanks opened up with their 50 mm machine guns. I could feel that bullets were hitting the aircraft around the wings and fuselage and the fuel also started to leak. I continued to fly and communicated enemy location to the base. I landed back. The aircraft had received 32 bullets, how did these missed me is again a miracle?”. Captain Niazi returned to Sialkot Strip and gave the news to Colonel Staff 15 Division personally. 15 Division immediately sent some anti tank weapons to Aik Nadi. As the enemy tanks arrived near Aik Nadi, these weapons(RR) fired upon them. Under the fire they turned back. Bullet riddled aircraft was later flown by Major Burki for repairs at Dhamial.

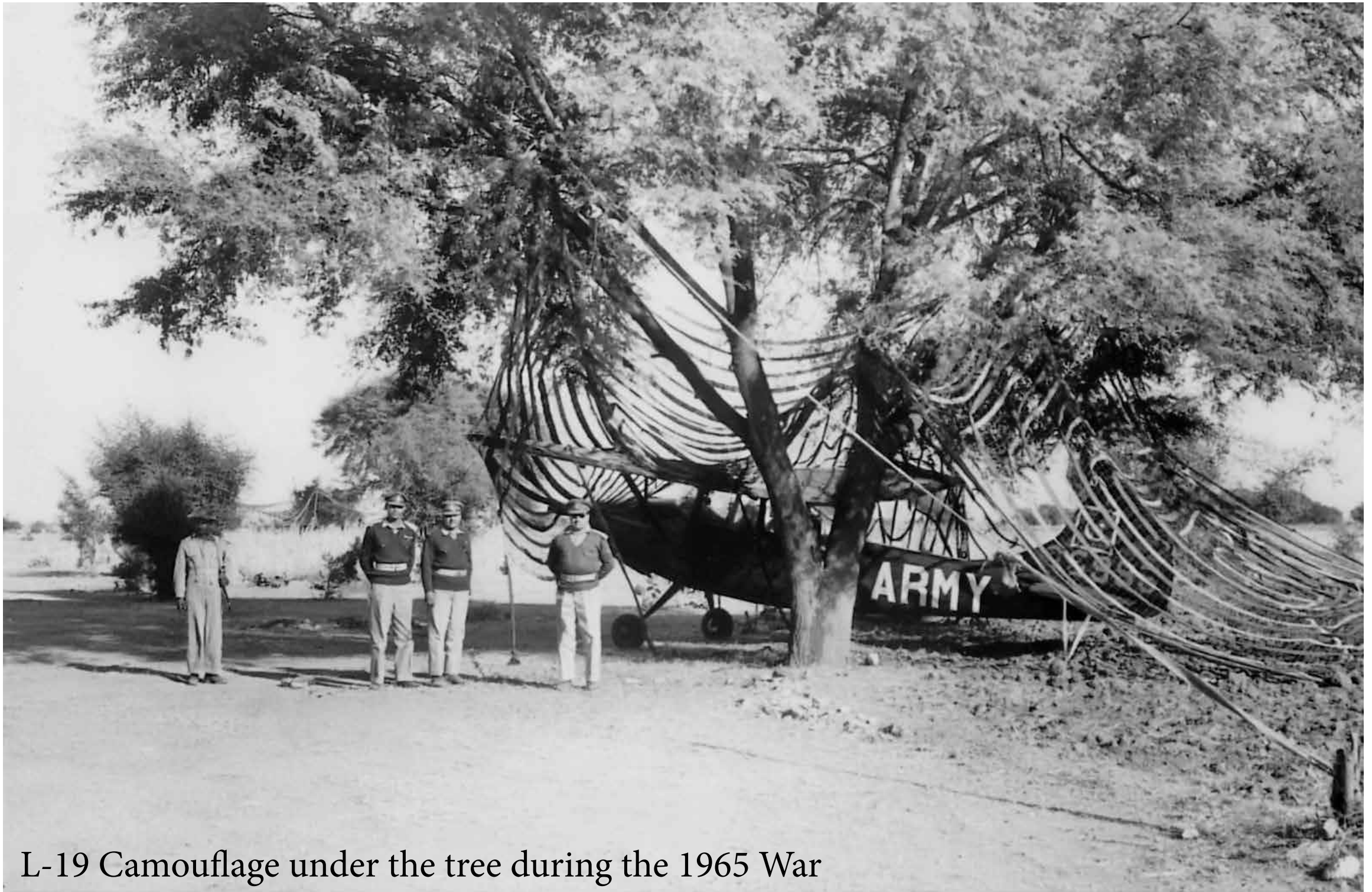
Chawinda-Phillaurah Axis

Indian move on Maharajke-Sialkot axis turned out to be a diversionary move. But where was the main attack coming from? On 8th September 1965, commanding officer and second-in-command of 1 Army Aviation Squadron flew out in a L-19. They first reached Chawinda and then started flying towards Phillaurah. There were no signs of any of our troops on the ground,. It was clear that 24 Brigade Group had not yet arrived back in that area. At a distance they saw a cloud of dust on the track Charwa-Chobara-Phillaurah. charging along that track towards Phillaurah at a high speed. Suddenly the second-in-command gave a shout of bandits to the commanding officer on the wireless. The L-19 was already flying low and the pilot braced himself for any evasive action that might be required. Suddenly he saw those aircraft diving towards the enemy column. The rockets fired were very accurate and a number of enemy vehicles were seen on fire. There were puffs of fire and smoke coming out every time these aircraft were diving in their attack runs and firing their rockets. There was a great excitement and the sight was very re-assuring. The pounding of our Air Force on the attacking columns of enemy armour had its telling effect. Between 10-15 of the enemy armoured vehicles were on fire. The attack had halted and the enemy tanks and other vehicles were hurriedly dispersing. Enemy again started its dash soon after the air attack was over. About twenty AMX tanks in line astern were charging towards Phillaurah, they by passed it and headed for Chawinda. The L-19 kept flying alongside the Indian advancing armoured vehicles and tanks. The need for integral fire support capability with the Army Aviation was never so acutely felt before. So far there was no resistance or opposition to the Indian advance on the ground. Suddenly from the direction of Chawinda signs of movement on the ground appeared, they were our own Patton tanks of 25 Cavalry. It was reminiscent of charge of Light Brigade at Balaclava. After a short but fierce fight the advancing Indian columns turned around on the same track that they came on.

Lieutenant Colonel Mahmud flew back to Sialkot and went straight to Headquarters 15 Division. His arrival was most anxiously awaited. The first accurate news and account of the arrival of 24 Brigade Group in the area of Chawinda, brought a sigh of relief. The account of rapid thrust of the Indian columns, the action of own Air Force, the enemy re-grouping and resumption of advance to Chawinda and the climax of sudden appearance of own Patton tanks, was both chilling and exhilarating. Later captured Operational Orders of Indian 17 Cavalry revealed that 17 and 16 Cavalry were part of

Maintenance Crew of 199 EME Battalion with OH-13S at Dhamial. 1965





L-19 Camouflage under the tree during the 1965 War

Indian Armoured Division. Whole operation had been stalled within 3-4 miles of launching by 24 Infantry Brigade and notably by 25 Cavalry Regiment. Commanding Officer 25 Cavalry, Lieutenant Colonel Nisar was awarded Sitara-i-Jur'at. Later these papers were handed over to Captain Askree for onward deliverance to General Headquarters. Command of 15 Division was also handed over to Major General Tikka. For the second time in two days, the accurate and authentic information provided by Army Aviation proved salutary. The first regarding Jassar Bridge the second one about 24 Brigade

9th September was relatively quiet. The enemy was licking his wounds inflicted by PAF and 25 Cavalry. The 4 Corps Artillery covered the entire front, stretching from Badiana to Deg Nadi (Zafarwal) and beyond. Any enemy attack or manoeuvre would immediately attract the fire of nearly ninety guns, field, medium and heavy calibre. 2 Army Aviation Squadron's War Diary records: "Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Khan took off at 0500 hours with Captain Muazzam to cooperate with Headquarters 15 Division for Artillery shoots. Enemy air force was active against them and they were also fired upon by the ground enemy guns. "On the evening of 9th September, 24 Brigade Group positions were attacked by the enemy tanks and infantry, it was repulsed by the 25 Cavalry supported by Artillery, Air OP also conducted shoots during its defensive action".

Air Control Team (ACT) Radio Sets in L-19

Army Aircraft did not have the requisite radio sets to communicate with the PAF jets at the start of war. It was Colonel Muhammad Khan's brain child to use the army aircraft fitted with ACT sets. 6 Armoured Division had only six sets out of which, two were out of action from the start, two were with Army Aviation, one was unserviceable and one was with the Divisional Headquarters. On 8th September Division Headquarters handed over two VRC-24 radio sets to 2 Army Aviation Squadron. Captain Jamil and Major Akhtar flew from Gujranwala and brought them back. They were fitted in aircraft and later one was handed over to No. 6 Flight at Sialkot.

The sets did not respond as desired, therefore on 9th September, Captain Muazzam flew with a signal technician from Gujranwala to Sialkot and landed back at 0100 hours with news of good communication established. Next day at 0445 hours Captain Jamil and Captain Sajjad took off for Sialkot from Gujranwala to hand over the sets fitted in L-19 to the flight. It was still dark at the strip, when pilots came for landing they hit the embankment and crashed. Set VRC 24 was brought back to Gujranwala and fitted in other aircraft and flown back to Sialkot. At 1000 hours same day another aircraft stalled and crashed at Adamke Strip with Major Rabbani and Captain Nagy on board.

11th September 1965 - Gadogar

By first light 11th September 1965 the full weight of the Indian Armoured Division's attack came at Gadgor. The Gadgor and Phillaurah positions were overrun by the advancing enemy armour. To stem the enemy advance, Guides Cavalry counter attacked and relieved pressure on 11 Cavalry. With the counter attack of Guides Cavalry from the location at Rakh Baba Bhure Shah towards Bhagowal and Phillaurah, an intense tank battle ensued. The Army Aviators were operating on the wireless nets of the artillery formations. This was only useful for quick adjustment of artillery fire. There was no direct contact with own armour and infantry units. The information to our field units had to be relayed through the artillery nets. Sometimes it caused delays and on occasions confusion. There were queries and counter queries, to clear the conflicting interpretations and descriptions. War Diary of 2 Squadron records:

“They (pilots) returned in the evening bringing back the news of heavy fighting in Sialkot Sector. Many enemy tanks were damaged and other military equipment and vehicles destroyed. Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Khan with artillery fire blew two enemy tanks up, Major Akhtar and Captain Muazzam claimed another one. Good job done by our bold pilots.”

12th September 1965-OH-13 Shot Down

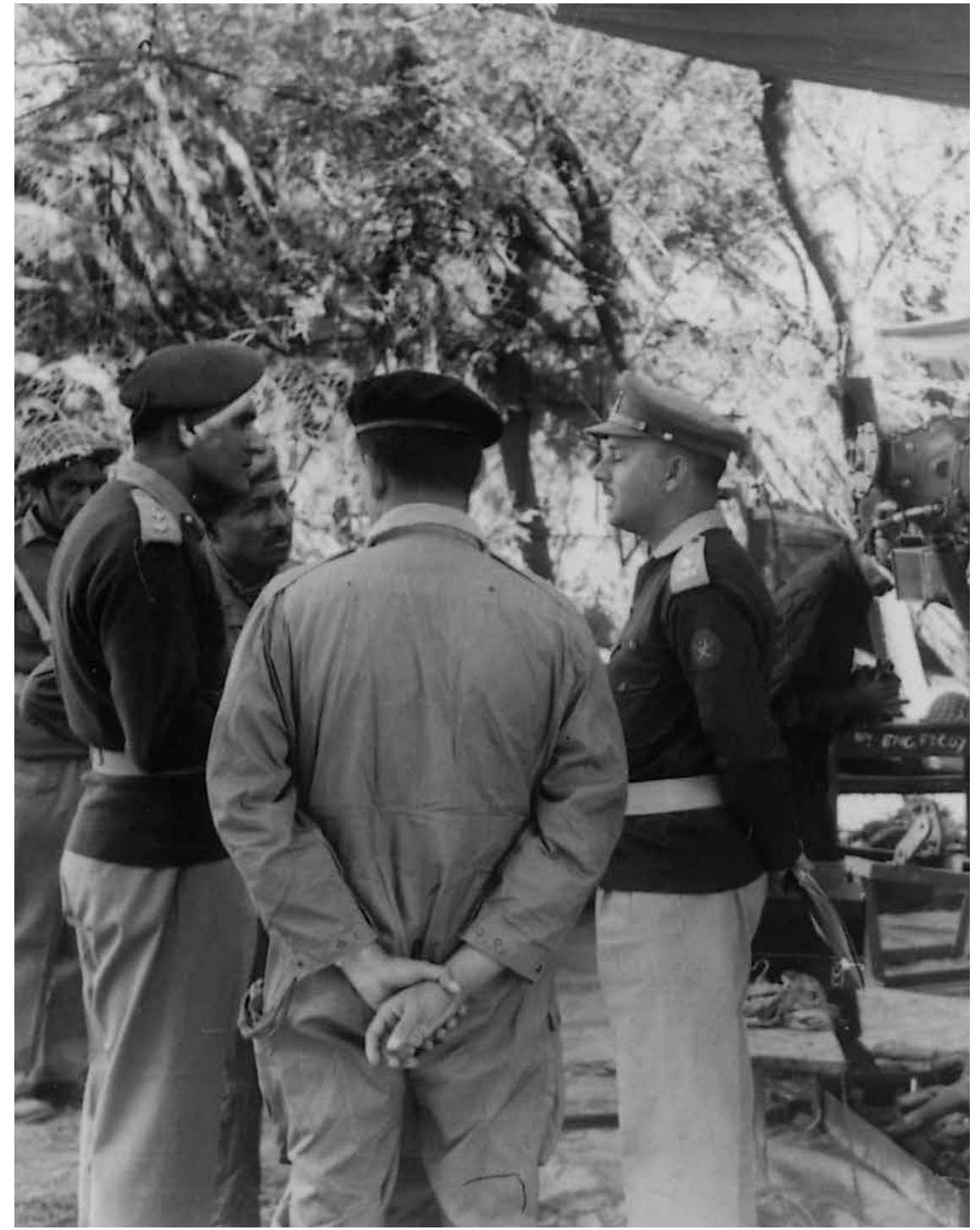
Soon after sunrise, Captain Bajwa of 3 Squadron attached with 2 Squadron, landed at the Headquarters 6 Armoured Division in Sialkot Sector. He took off with GSO-1 (Operations) Lieutenant Colonel Nazir Ahmed towards Chawinda where own cavalry regiments were engaged with the enemy and some important orders had to be conveyed in person. The fluid battle situation had no clear cut demarcation of the troops.

As the helicopter was crossing Phillaurah it was fired upon by the Indian tanks. Pilot landed the helicopter safely just a few hundred meters away from the tanks. Immediately on landing Captain Bajwa switched off the helicopter and before dashing to safety burnt the operational map. As a precaution both the officers ran in different direction with bullets from tanks chasing them. Captain Bajwa reached own troops after hours of crawling and walking through sugarcane fields. Lieutenant Colonel Nazir also made it to the safety in the midnight hours.

Soon after sunrise, Captain Bajwa of 3 Squadron attached with 2 Squadron, landed at the Headquarters 6 Armoured Division in Sialkot Sector. The pilot waited for the early morning briefing / conference to end. At about 0730 hours the conference ended and the G-1 Operations Lieutenant Colonel Nazir Ahmed came to the chopper and told the pilot to start up. The pilot paused and requested for some briefing regarding the mission. Overwhelmed with some urgency he said that he would guide the pilot and that he should first land at Chawinda, where he shall be briefed before proceeding to the tank regiment at Phillora. The pilot inquired if the regiment had been informed about their arrival. The G-1 briefed an officer to



Captain Sajjad Nazim and Captain Manzur Bajwa



Colonel (Lt Gen) A.B. Awan with Lt Col Saeed Qadir (Lt Gen) of 199 EME Battalion



Field Maintenance of L-19 by Pioneers



Pilots getting head shave in the Field at Gujranwala during War 1965

pass the message on the wireless and advise them to wave a white hankie. He was carrying a fairly large size mounted map marked with the battle locations and asked if it would fit inside. He kept the map in his lap. After take off the pilot kept the G-1 well oriented with the terrain by pointing out salient features en route. The pilot was directed to land on the outskirts of Chawinda and keep the helicopter engine running. The Colonel summoned an officer nearby and asked for directions. We flew around outskirts of Chawinda town, where the new trenches were being dug. During the pilots briefing last night at the squadron, our FDL's were at Phillora the previous evening. By now the passenger had informed the pilot that he was proceeding to personally contact elements of a tank regiment, which was in contact with the enemy. The colonel was to pass some vital information / briefing personally as the same could not be risked on the wireless. When the pilot was directed to follow the road to Phillora, he did not hesitate. The pilot had been assigned on two missions inside enemy territory during Rann Kutch battle, last April. The pilot took necessary precautions when directed to proceed to Phillora. The pilot narrates.

“Realising that we were going into no mans land, we headed towards Phillora, keeping to the west of the road, flying at below the tree top level, to avoid detection from the ground as well as aerial interception. I had to keep a good lookout for our survival. Beyond Chawinda there were no signs of life or any movement as far as one could see, in about 5 miles visibility. There were occasional scanty crops along the way up to village Kallewali, which was totally deserted. Not even a stray dog was to be seen. I identified the village to the colonel while passing by. The Colonel urged the pilot to proceed ahead towards Phillora. Between Kallewali and Phillora there were no crops. The flat ploughed fields for the next 1000 yards had turned into fine powdery dust. At Phillora a knoll about 30 ft high indicated tell tale signs of an OP position.

In the meanwhile the Indians had earlier intercepted our wireless message. Realising that a chopper is likely to fly close to their position to proceed to a cavalry squadron that had encircled and cut them out from the north. Ostensibly the Indians ordered their tanks at Phillora to shut down turrets and point the guns backwards. I spotted one tank camouflaged in the scanty sugar cane field barely 100 yards west of the high ground and pointed it to the colonel. Immediately three more tanks were spotted by me and indicated to the passenger. All the tanks were littered with dust with their guns pointing towards India and camouflaged at the edge of the sugar cane fields. No soldiers were visible anywhere. The colonel directed me to land close to the nearest tank. I declined to land and kick up a whirlwind of dust, that would have given out our position. Instead I reduced speed and proceeded to land about 200 yards beyond the nearest tank. This dust free spot with scanty cotton field beyond the tank provided good cover from ground and air. The far sides of the cotton field had about 10 feet tall “Jantar” hedge that would provide cover on the ground. As the chopper passed a beam the nearest tank the pilot heard a burst of machine gun fire. Barely at 10 feet above the ground and drifting at a low speed, the helicopter suddenly started yawing to the left. Increasing engine power would worsen the torque. Countering the torque with cyclic control provided some momentum. Gaining sufficient speed was not possible.

On hearing the fire the colonel started cursing the ground troops and was anxiously waiting to step out, for which he had opened the side door slightly, while the chopper was still on the move. I was struck with disbelief and decided on SOS measures. The pilot gradually tried to abort landing as the chopper was yawing to the left despite excessive cyclic tilt to the opposite side. In 3 large oval turns the pilot managed to drag the chopper about 250 yards towards our side of the nearest tank. After the 3rd dragging turn to offset the apparent loss of torque I put the chopper down facing the tank. It was not possible

to drag it any further. The colonel by now had realised that we had been hit. He was convinced that we were being engaged by own troops by mistake. On touchdown he immediately got out and ran towards the tank cursing them loudly.

After a quick shutdown procedure I bolted for the cover beyond the raised surface of the unmetalled road, at a distance of about 60 yards to the right. As I dashed across the road and ducked behind the cover of the raised road, I heard the nearest tank fire with its main gun. A quick peep at the helicopter indicated it was a miss. The second round was obviously a hit. All the other 3 tanks fired one shot each in turn. I felt sad to see the brand new helicopter which had barely logged 100 hrs, burn to ashes. The Colonel had left the marked map inside which burned along with the helicopter. I realised our lives were in grave danger with little chance of survival. The tanks were only 250-500 yards away and we were pinned down over 4 miles ahead of our new front line. It seemed absolutely hopeless. Within minutes we heard a battery of field guns fire a salvo. The number of bangs confirmed it was Indian. Thank God the battery fired a few salvos in concentration at the helicopter only. The time at this point was 0830 hrs on my watch.

In the meanwhile our forces intercepted an Indian wireless message from Phillora “ We have shot down a commando helicopter and two commandos have taken cover with a machine gun and a sten gun and we have pinned them down. We have requested for artillery fire and air support.” With this message every one had lost hope of our survival. Both of us had only a pistol each. At the loss of all the hope for survival in the lap of the enemy, I momentarily went into a trance. In a split second, images of all the dear relations, family and friends flashed through the mind at a fast speed. At the end I felt sorry to realise that they will all be hurt on hearing the news.

Gradually I gathered strength and started imagining there might be hope for survival. I was hoping our jets might launch a strike, for a chopper to rescue us under the air cover. In a few minutes I could hear the jets. These jets were coming from the Indian side. I tucked myself into a pit besides the road. Four jets made two passes each rocketing, the burning helicopter. Later the



Captain Manzoor Bajwa

leader of this formation got a gallantry award for shooting us down. Fortunately the artillery had fired in concentration at the chopper and none of the shells fell on the road or on our side. In the meanwhile the colonel who had taken cover at least 50 yards closer to the tanks, had by now crawled close to me and urged me to keep moving. I convinced him that he should now follow my advice being a gunner.

In the meanwhile enough dust and smoke provided us cover and we managed to crawl homewards, by about 100 yards. As the dust settled the tanks must have spotted our dusty crawl across the road and showered a few bursts of machine gun fire, which passed over our heads. The slightly raised road provided us adequate protection while flushed with the ground. We stopped crawling and froze at the same spot for a while, keeping our ears wide open. In a few minutes the artillery fire was resumed. Now the target seemed to be the road. A concentrated salvo fell barely 50 yards ahead of us. We thanked god for the pause. The colonel urged me to continue crawling but I did not let him move till the next salvo landed another 50 yards ahead. It was apparent that the artillery observer wanted to comb the road up to Kallewali village. We started crawling desperately behind the moving artillery fire. The fire moved faster than we could crawl. After several minutes the fire lifted. We crawled all the way up to 100 yards short of the village. Surprisingly none of the tanks made an attempt to leave their positions in order to capture us. With passage of time our hopes gained strength. We paused 100 yards short of the village in order to assess the situation and to have a breather.

The village was on raised ground and the last 100 yards of road was devoid of any trees or cover from observation. We were certain that the tanks barely 1000 yards away, would engage us over this patch. We therefore had to run for life over this stretch, which required all the strength. The colonel was no longer in a state to continue crawling. He urged me to carry on without him while I did not wish to leave him alone. Finally when he explained that he could not proceed any further, due to exhaustion and that I should get along and send help. It seemed to make sense now. I expected the road passing through the village to be mined and decided to run for the nearest four feet high boundary wall of a house and jump across. I therefore gathered all my strength and bolted over the exposed stretch and somersaulted over the boundary wall, into the nearest house drawing fire from the tanks. I followed the fresh tank tracks to the middle of the village. Before leaving the village, I popped up to peer over the wall to scan the entire area to the east of the road. I noticed a jeep trudging along cross country, from the west. The jeep mounted with a weapon was heading towards the village, at about one mile distance. Cautioning the colonel without response I got on to the road and ran along the fresh tank or vehicle tracks leading out of the village.

Beyond the village I decided to deflect about 30 degrees to the right to proceed under cover of the crops and along a depression in the ground. Once at a reasonable safe distance in the middle of the scanty corn crop I managed to have a look at the village. The jeep was now at the forward edge of the village on the raised road, apparently assessing the situation. I ran along momentarily kicking the dusty ground along the bank of the small nullah before getting low and out of sight. I am not certain if that drew enemy attention but the jeep soon after sprayed bullets wildly, in the general direction. I proceeded along safely but an angle to my desired direction to Chawinda. After going for 1.5 mile I diverted towards the road and then walked leisurely when Chawinda was in sight. On a hot and humid day, by now I was exhausted and fairly bruised on elbows and knees. The flying suit was muddy with sweat and dust and torn at the elbows and knees. I was rather dehydrated with terribly dry lips and throat. It was almost mid day by now.

As Chawinda drew closer, a sudden fear started haunting and depressing me. Would the soldiers on the frontline care to identify me before opening fire at someone looking as strange as me in my unfamiliar attire? The thought of being killed at the hands of our own troops, after having escaped an unbelievable ordeal, was too depressing and pitiable. From about 1000 yards I tried to walk with the hands over my head, not easily possible in my present state. Nevertheless I put in all efforts to look as harmless as a dove. As I came closer, I noticed troops emerging out of the crops and descending into the trenches and pointing their weapons at the stranger. I felt like a convict facing a firing squad. I proceeded slowly and cautiously.

At about 200 yards I was challenged and asked to come closer. At about 50 yards I tried to identify myself to their amusement. Soon an officer emerged on the scene and took over. As soon as I was recognised I desperately asked for the water. The company commander also appeared on the scene. He sympathised and remarked, Bajwa when I heard the news, I hoped it was not you. Little did I know.” He confided that I was the only one aviator that he knew, from the infantry school course during 1963. At the battalion HQ I narrated the episode to Lt.Col. Shinwari, the CO 22 Baluch.

While the doctor put me on the stretcher for the first aid, I started narrating the details to the CO. The colonel ordered his jeep to be mounted with a machine gun and a section of selected soldiers to prepare to accompany him for recovering Lt. Col Nazir. He refused to take me along due to my physical condition. Within half an hour the party departed along the road towards Phillora. Within half an hour we heard the exchange of small arms fire for several minutes. After about two hours the party returned. From a distance we concluded the news was not good. On return Colonel Shinwari seemed depressed. He confirmed that they had searched up to the forward edge of the village and beyond and drew enemy fire. There was no sign of Colonel Nazir, as he had not responded to their shouting for him even by name.

I mentioned to the Colonel that having gone through what we had , one would not trust any one and I was confident that he would show up during the night . The front line troops were conveyed to be cautious and hold fire at night as the Colonel was expected to cross the FDL's during the night. At 1500 hours I departed by road, to join the number 2 composite squadron at Gujranwala. The following morning I heard the good news that the colonel had crossed over at night and was admitted in the hospital, suffering from shell shock and exhaustion. I was allowed to meet him only on the third day. When we were face to face, I had to introduce myself, as he failed to recognise me, although I was in a similar flying suit. On recognition he embraced me passionately. With tears in his eyes, he remarked, “ No one shall ever believe what we have gone through and are still alive.

”The colonel then narrated that after our separation he discovered the presence of a graveyard in the vicinity of the village. He crawled and rolled over, into a sunken grave and soon passed out. He vaguely recalled having heard small arms fire on two occasions. He had no idea about the recovery attempt for his rescue. He finally woke up when it was dark and made his way to the FDL's at around midnight. When hostilities ended and the forces were withdrawn, Major Bajwa and Col Nazir, revisited the crash site on 7.5.66. The same flight of 12.9.65 was simulated. The H-13 helicopter followed the same height speed and the flight path till touch down. The distances were paced and the entire episode recalled and the Almighty thanked once again, for giving us another life.

1 Army Aviation Squadron had to change its location as strip was becoming nuisance. It was hemmed in by a Medium Regiment on one side and a Heavy Battery on the other. Enemy air and counter bombardment was equally shared by all three. Only once an L-19 got the splinters. After the intense fire of 10/11 September, squadron reshuffled its deployment at the landing ground. Pasrur Airfield was also scene of intense aerial and ground activities. Own 1st Armoured Division also joined there. A good number of Army aircraft operated around and an Officer's Mess was established in the vicinity of the World War- II vintage airfield at Pasrur. Although strip was established on 16th September but airfield was under use from the beginning. On 12th September at 0630 hours when pilots after landing were in the process of covering their aircraft they were attacked by the IAF, heavy bombs were dropped apart from strafing.

13th September 1965 - Zafarwal

On 12th September 1965 Army Aviators noticed enemy movement towards Zafarwal and the information was passed to 6 Armoured Division. They reacted and Zafarwal was occupied on the night 12th /13th September 1965. On the morning of 13th September 1965 the enemy main attack came at Zafarwal. The biggest tank battle since WW-2 was unfolding. In the face of the enemy attack, own infantry positions were holding ground. Situation was turning favourably however a squadron of 32 Tank Delivery Unit (Sherman Tanks) under fog of war withdrew from its position. The pilot of L-19 operating in the area, Captain Niazi, was told on the wireless net to give the message to the squadron to immediately return to Zafarwal. The pilot flew over the tanks moving towards Dhamtal. He gestured and kept indicating to them to return to Zafarwal. There was no response. He wrote a message and dropped it but to no avail. Sensing that all efforts had failed, the pilot landed the L-19 on the road in front of the tanks. The squadron at that time was commanded by a Risaldar. Captain Niazi personally explained the position to him and ordered to return back to Zafarwal. The tanks were thus successfully sent back. They later effectively participated against the enemy at Zafarwal Sector.

Captain Zafar was carrying out the reconnaissance mission in Pasrur area when his L-19 was hit by the ground fire, he never knew about that and it was only after landing that he was shown the holes. Intensive flying was kept up despite the activities of IAF. Increasing demands of artillery shoots were met by pooling all resources of pilots and aircraft.

Major Akhtar's Decisive Shoot

On 13th September 1965, Major Akhtar, second-in-command of 2 Army Aviation Squadron flew in the Pasrur area for aerial observation. He spotted enemy infantry pausing under cover, due to communication problem he gained height and was easily picked up by the enemy fighter. Despite enemy fighter, Major Akhtar brought own artillery fire on enemy and completed the shoot successfully. Later own fighters shot down the intruder.

First Air Support Request Through L-19

On 13th September 1965 for the first time Army Aviation called upon air support successfully through ACT fitted in L-19, piloted by Captain Jamil. Through air action five enemy tanks were burnt. Under the intense fire of own guns, the enemy tanks would disperse and bury themselves in the mud houses for their camouflage. The same practice they would follow, whenever our Air Force pounded them. Own Air Force was doing sorties very regularly and effectively. The ACT set carried in the L-19, was proving to be very helpful. The aerial observers were most efficiently directing our aircraft on to the enemy tanks. “Five enemy tanks were destroyed and later another three were seen burning due to air force attacks conducted by airborne control team.” (War Diary 2 Army Aviation Squadron).

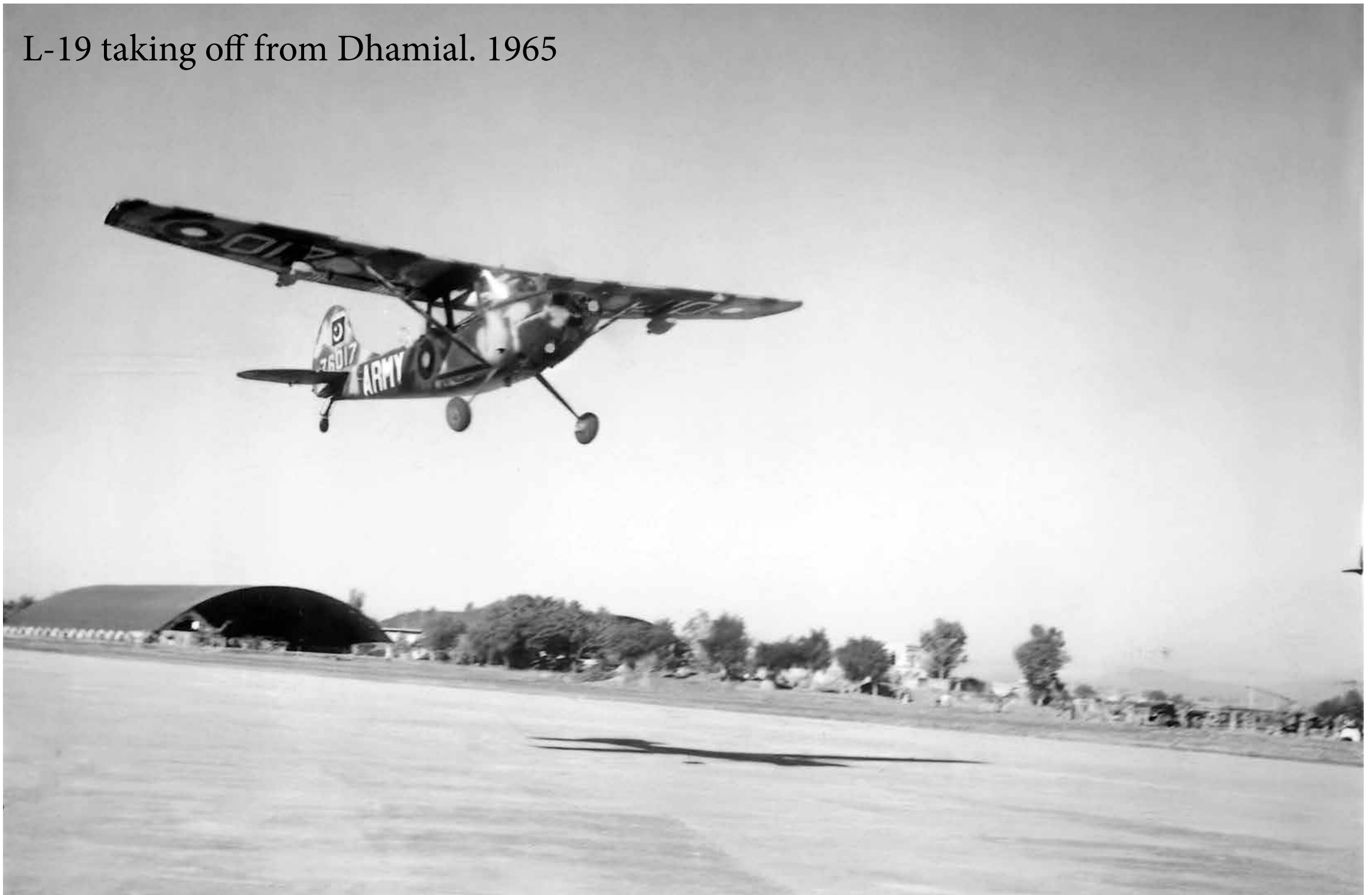
On 14th September one Ultra High Frequency (UHF) radio set was provided by 1 Corps Headquarters to 1 Army Aviation Squadron and on the same very day at 0700 hours Major Rabbani along with Captain Jamil directed own aircraft towards enemy tanks with remarkable success. At 1330 hours Captain Muazzam and Captain Jamil again undertook this mission. They stayed for over four hours and twice directed own aircraft onto the enemy. Despite all the confusion of the intense battle on the ground, the close range engagements of our tanks, there was not a single case where own aircraft attacked any of our own tanks as of mistaken identity. This does reflect the professionalism of our Air Force pilots but also the fact that Army Aviators were very useful in guiding our own pilots. The knowledge of the ground, the exact location of the enemy armour and the full familiarity of own positions greatly helped them in meeting that role. Lieutenant Colonel Saleem Ullah later rang Colonel Mohammad Khan and conveyed PAF’s appreciation.

14th September, Captain Niazi and “The Destruction of Indian 14 Mountain Division”

On 14th September 1965 Captain HUK Niazi was sent for a surveillance mission around Zafarwal. He did not return for another four hours which was causing commotion at Adamke Strip. As soon as Captain Niazi landed. He explained his prolonged absence. “After take off I gained height and started flying towards Zafarwal, I saw no enemy activity in the area so I decided to fly north of our positions at Deg Nadi. It was 0815 hours, the sun was in the east. Looking at some distance, I noticed very flashy reflections of the rays of the sun. This was over a fairly large area. This greatly intrigued me and I kept flying in that direction. I crossed the International Boundary, west of Deg Nadi. Getting nearer to these reflections, I saw a huge concentration of enemy vehicles some 4 miles west of Samba. I had a very careful look, that was why I took so long in coming back, my estimates are 2000-3000 vehicles.” He further informed his commanding officer that he had passed that information to divisional headquarters on the artillery net, requesting for Air Force strike.

Lieutenant Colonel Mahmud immediately flew to Headquarters 1 Corps. He conveyed the information personally to Lieutenant General Rana, the corps commander. Lieutenant Colonel Mahmud further very strongly suggested to him that he should himself request the Air Headquarters for an air strike. He did that very promptly. The Air Headquarters was very reluctant to accept the authenticity of the news. Under insistence from the Corps Commander initially only two fighter reconnaissance aircraft were sent. Arriving overhead, they confirmed that news. On the air they requested for all available aircraft to be sent for strike in that area. Soon four F-86 of 18 Squadron, led by Squadron Leader Alau Din ‘Butch’ arrived. They kept pounding them with all the

L-19 taking off from Dhamial. 1965



weapons available, including the napalm bombs, used for the first time in war. Squadron Leader 'Butch' on the same noon, destroyed ammunition train at Gurdaspur. Lion hearted 'Butch' never returned from that sortie.

The prisoners belonging to this formation captured later disclosed that Indian reinforcement (14 Infantry Division) had arrived in Samba area on 14th September. While still in their concentration area, they were spotted and very badly mauled by Pakistan Air Force. They ceased to exist as a proper fighting formation after that. From the captured enemy 1 Armoured Brigade "OO No. 3", which was signed on 13th September at 1315 hours, it was clear that the main Indian Armoured Division's attack was planned to be launched sometimes on or after 14th September 1965.

16th September - Climax

Indian attack did not proceed as planned. The fierce tank battle which started on 13th September reached its climax on 16th September. From the early morning of 16th September, the L-19 aircraft were observing clearly the three main enemy columns of attack. One column was directed towards Chawinda, the centre column was making its thrust between Chawinda and Rakh Baba Bhuhre Shah and the third enemy column was directing its attack west of the Rakh towards Badiana. The Army Aviators kept informing the details of this operation to the relevant formations. The heroic and bold fight of our tank crews blunted a very determined attack of the enemy.

Army Aviators were assisting own troops by reporting enemy movements, directions of attack, reinforcements, losses and also directing own artillery fire on enemy troops, concentration areas and rear areas. The battlefield littered with twisted steel, fire, smoke and stench of burnt human flesh also reflected the grit and determination of those who would not give up even an inch of Pakistani land and the stubbornness of attackers who wanted to achieve a breakthrough to the Grand Trunk Road. The effective concentration of all available guns, on the attacking enemy armour columns coupled with the accurate and effective direction of our air force, through the ACT sets fitted in the aircraft, did highlight the humble contribution of the unarmed L-19 aircraft.

Captain Akhtar (lieutenant colonel retired) has profound memories of one such sortie. "We were flying over Chawinda and directing the fire of own artillery guns as Air OP. On the front seat was Captain Niazi, I was in the rear. We looked around and saw two Indian Mystere aircraft overhead. Indian aircraft took a turn and aligned their machines to attack our unarmed, slow moving L-19. Niazi once again put the nose down but could not escape fast enough; the bullets started to go through the aircraft. The enemy fire failed to kill us but crippled the aircraft. With controls damaged, we could not fly straight, one wing of the aircraft was down so we could only go round and round in circles. We managed to reach Sialkot Strip and tried to put the aircraft down. It was one wing landing. The wing first touched the ground and the aircraft started to somersault. The aircraft broke into pieces and we came out of the cockpit without a scratch. The aircraft was littered with bullet holes. Surely, one would only die when destined by Allah."

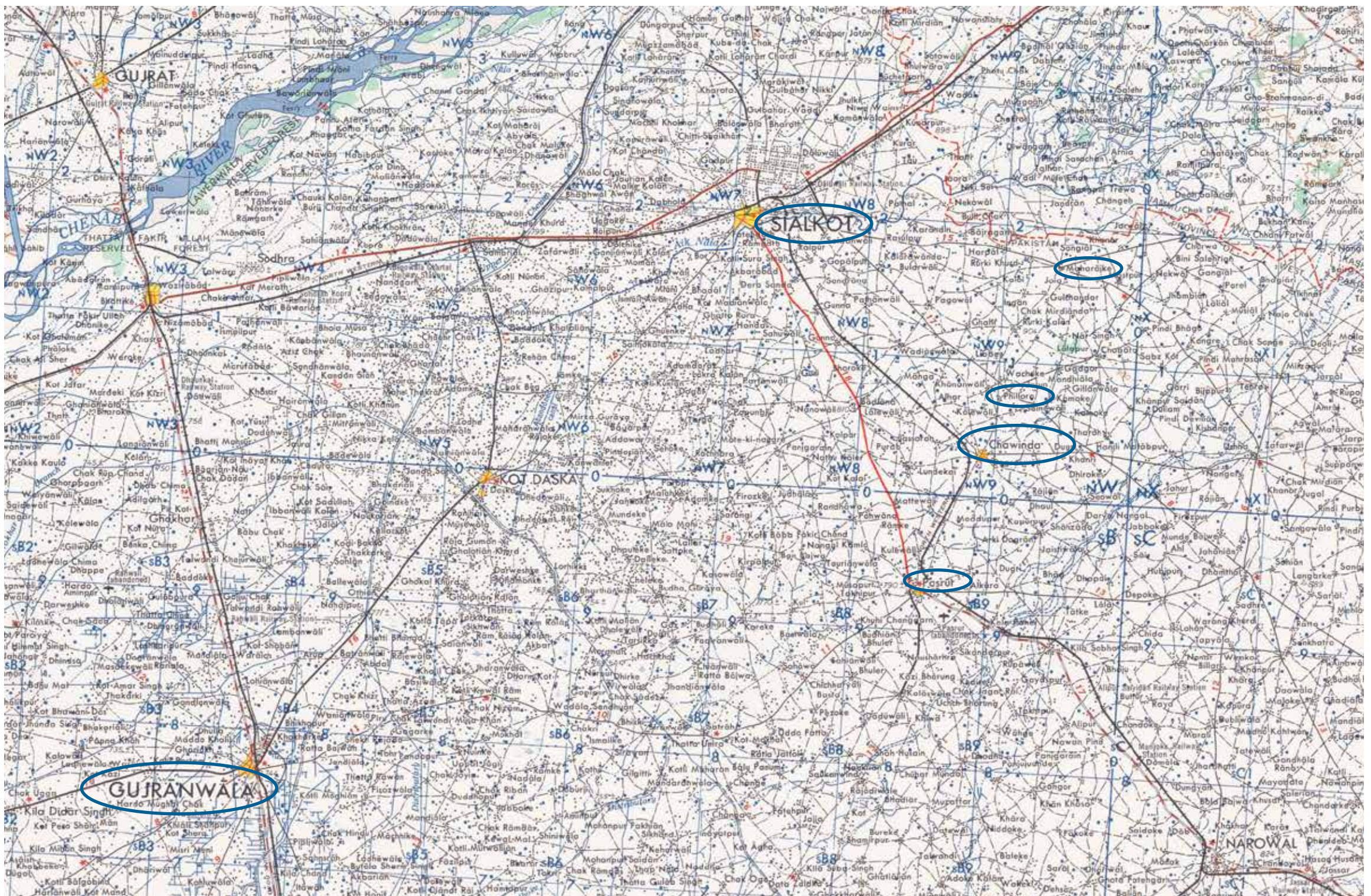


Artistic depiction of Captain Hidayat Niazi detection of Indian Infantry Division and its destruction by PAF

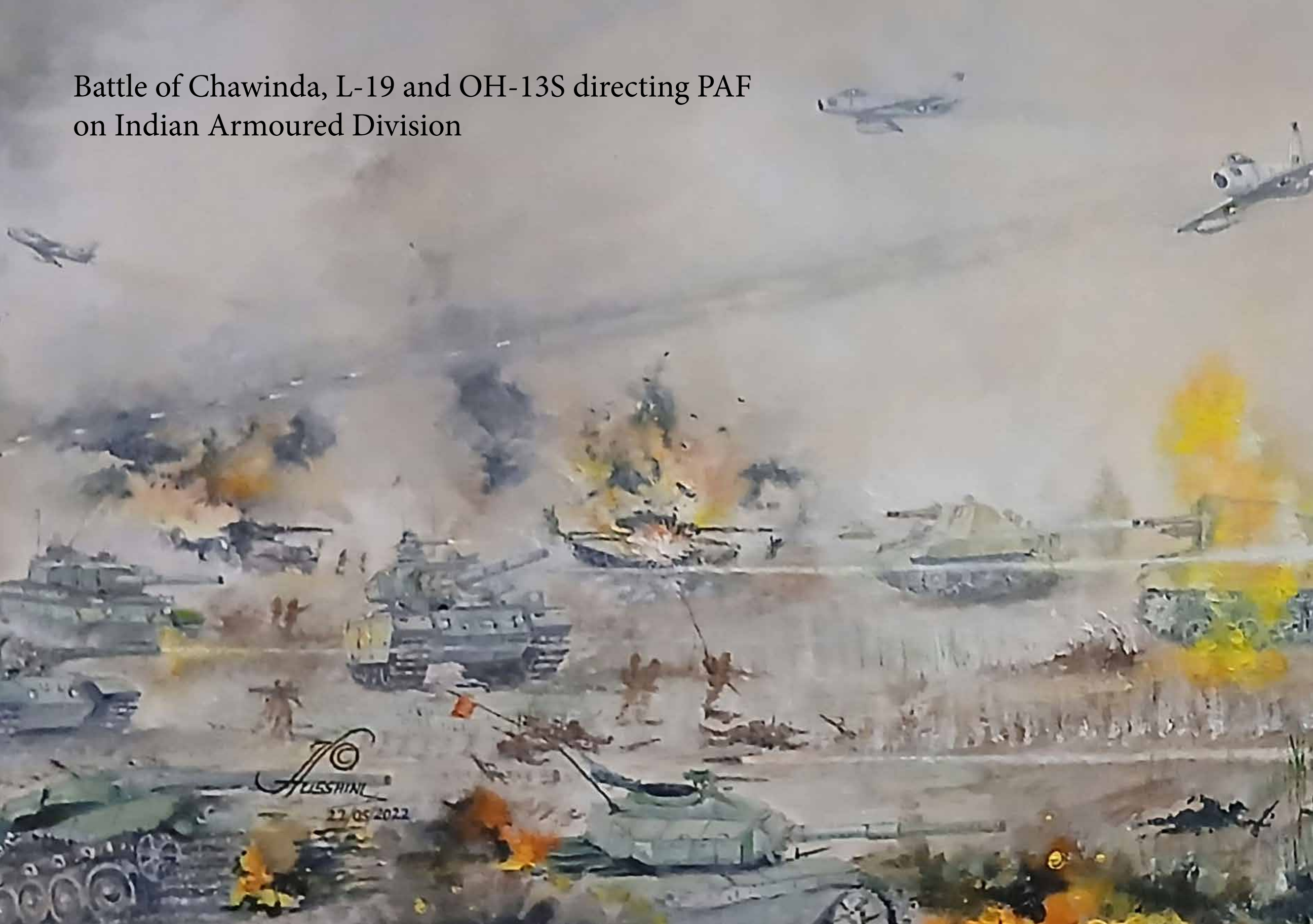


Captain Muazzam (Air OP) directing PAF attack on Indian Armoured Division





Battle of Chawinda, L-19 and OH-13S directing PAF
on Indian Armoured Division



FLISHINI
22.05.2022



18th September - Captain Muazzam Conducts Airborne Shoot by L-19

On 18th September 1965 the Battle of Chawinda was in the final phase with enemy craving for a break through but own troops determined not to give an inch of the motherland. Captain Muazzam took off at 0630 hours with Captain Jamil as co-pilot to act as Forward Airborne Air Controller, target was enemy heavy guns, 6 miles inside enemy territory close to Nawan Shehr. Time over target for own fighters was 0700 hours. Visibility was poor and observation difficult. As they flew forward for better observation they came under enemy anti aircraft fire but Captain Muazzam boldly and skilfully directed own fighters amidst this panoramic fire. He flew up till 500 yards of enemy guns, 3 out of 6 guns were destroyed.

Army Aviation Base Dhamial

Aircraft were dispersed at the base, L-19s and few OH-13 were camouflaged under the trees near present day Fauji Factory. Air Defence elements were also placed at the intersection consisting of 37 mm and 14.5 mm four barrel guns.

First Operational Night Mission - Night Flight To Sargodha

Brigadier retired Hamid Chaudhry writes, “In 1965 when war broke out, I was in Army Aviation School as a Qualified Flying Instructor. On 7th September night flying was scheduled for P-7 Course. When I reached the school at night commandant Lieutenant Colonel M M Karim called me and Captain Rasheed Beg (Qualified Flying Instructor) in his office. He briefed us regarding a night mission to Sargodha and back. PAF on the instructions from General Headquarters had flown a photo reconnaissance mission over Jammu area and the photographs were to be picked up from operations room at PAF Base Sargodha and flown to General Headquarters for operational planning. The photographs were to be brought as soon as possible, therefore we were ordered to take off immediately. I filed a flight plan with the tower, the only briefing I got from Air Traffic Controller consisted of the following three sentences:-

“Sargodha Base has been informed of your mission. Sargodha Base is likely to be attacked by Indian Air Force tonight therefore keep your navigation lights off and keep radio communication to bare minimum. On arrival at Sargodha you might not get the runway lights for landing therefore land in total darkness.”

“We took off at around 2030 hours on the 7th September 1965 in L-19 No. 013 for Sargodha Base. We had just crossed Salt Range and started descending when we got a short call from Sargodha. “L-19 approaching Sargodha stay to the North, Sargodha under air raid.” The next thing we saw was an umbrella barrage being fired by own Anti Aircraft Regiments. I am myself an Anti Aircraft Gunner and had read about “Umbrella Barrage” but seeing one was really believing it. We started circling over Jhelum River and after ten minutes were cleared to approach Sargodha Airfield for landing. We headed towards the airfield and according to time flown should have been overhead the field but not a single thing was visible on ground due to complete black out.

OH-13S at a forward post during 1965 War



Sargodha runway had a black surface, which added to our difficulty of recognition. Sargodha controller was hesitant to talk to us and not prepared to give us runway lights for landing. In the meantime to our good luck we saw two jets taking off from the runway. We were at such a position that we could see the flames coming out of their tail pipes. We immediately headed for the runway, informed the ATC and made a safe landing.

We were still rolling on the runway and happily discussing our safe landing that we got another short call from the air traffic controller “L-19 get off the runway, switch off and take cover.” We immediately pulled off towards the fair weather strip and went close to the tree line. Within seconds we saw the Anti Aircraft Regiment firing another Umbrella Barrage. At the same time we heard a formation of Indian Jets drop two heavy bombs at the airfield at low level. The only damage caused was to a taxi track and luckily there was no loss of life or aircraft. Witnessing an umbrella barrage is one thing but penetrating it requires a lion’s heart, the devil must be given his due, they were brave pilots. Later we learnt that they were four aircraft and one was hit.

Once that raid was over, we started the aircraft and taxied to the parking area. We called for the required documents from PAF Operations Room and headed back for Dhamial. We reached Dhamial past the mid night where representatives from General Headquarters were eagerly waiting.” This was the first operational night mission of 1965 war by an Air OP.

Turning into a Bomber Base

On some nights, Dhamial Base was utilized by the PAF to launch couple of their improvised strategic bombers to take care of the suspected enemy concentrations behind the front-lines. For the purpose, the fleet of lumbering C-130 was utilized with ingenuity and imagination. Such actions always created some excitement at the base. Lieutenant Colonel Naseer Ullah Babar was the duty officer at the base when the sortie of C-130 was conducted. He recalls: “It was the policy of PAF to disperse their aircraft in anticipation of Indian air attacks. My office was at the present day tea bar. At night I received a call from a Grade-1 staff officer at Lahore in which he mentioned about the reports of Indian concentration close to BRB Canal. Wing Commander Eric of PAF was also listening and he inquired about the situation on which I mentioned the conversation. The original task of C-130 was somewhere but Wing Commander Eric insisted on taking up that task in addition to the already designated targets and after lot of coordination the mission was finally approved. The bombing was accurate and deadly and later Wing Commander Eric was awarded with Sitara-I-Jurat.

Beavers arrived at Dhamial Base

Four Beaver(L-20) aircraft were requisitioned from Plant Protection Department. These six-seater, single-engine aircraft arrived at Dhamial Base on 27th July 1965. On 6th September evening there were two of these aircraft at the Base. On 8th another Beaver was flown in by Mr. Zaka Ullah Khan and remained so till 24th March 1966. Selected officers, including Majors Ayub, Fazal ur Rehman, Mansoor Sial, Aftab, Masoom, Saqlain and Captain Abdul Rasheed Baig underwent conversion from 14th June-26th June and from 2nd July to 17th July 1965. These officers had been familiar with the Beaver aircraft by virtue of undergoing instrument flying on it either at Stuttgart (Germany) or at Fort Rucker (America). Instructor was Mr. Zaka Ullah Khan, the Chief pilot of Plant Protection at Karachi ; all Beavers were in Yellow Colour.

The first operational sortie was under taken By Major Ayub and Major Fazal ur Rehman on 7th September 1965. It flew to Quetta and brought Major General Shahibzada Yaqub Ali Khan and Colonel Sawar Khan(later Vice Chief of Army Staff). Both the officers were urgently required at General Headquarters; as Command and Staff College had been closed. On 20th September 1965, two Indian pilots (POWs) were flown from Rahwali to Rawalpindi. Mr. Zakaullah Khan also flew operational sorties. He writes, “For days I would fly from Dhamial to Karachi, Hyderabad, landing down on the way at various places(HQs), delivering critical ammunition, medicines, mail and surveillance. I flew first Indian POW from Chhor to Rawalpindi, he was Colonel K.K.V. Nimba. Army Commander, General Musa was also flown by me on 18th September 1965 from Rawalpindi to Suleimanke.” Colonel Awan, Lieutenant Colonel Zafar Khan the base second-in-command along with Lieutenant Colonels Mahmud and Saeed Qadir, planned to turn Beaver into a light bomber aircraft. Trials were conducted at Bara Khau at the end of war. Bombing was to be done by a little modification, installing a commode like structure with an aperture for dropping an appropriate size bomb manually on selected target. Beavers flew 377 operational hours.

Lieutenant Colonel Muhammad Khan, after consultation with the technical staff, improvised a pod for mounting a medium machine gun(MMG) on the OH-13 helicopter skids but it was bit too late as the war was about to terminate.

Local Defence At Dhamial

Local defence of the huge perimeter was organized with the available left-over units and obviously the main chunk came from the maintenance side responsible for base-repairs. For the purpose, services of available infantry officers were utilized to the maximum. Captain Khalid Javed Janjua (later Lieutenant Colonel retired) from Punjab Regiment, sited the trenches and weapons. He also tried to train the available technicians as infantry men. Captain Irshad Gul, from Piffer Battalion was made responsible to organize and lead a reserve force in case of an unforeseen eventuality.



Capt Abdul Rashid Baig

Enemy Paratroopers

On 7th September Lieutenant Colonel Saleem Ullah was in the General Headquarters to attend the daily briefing. Army Chief General Musa was also present. Colonel Saleem narrates: “I was standing in one corner when telephone rang, since General Musa was close by he picked up the telephone and talked. Later he told us that Indian paratroopers had landed in Sargodha area and inquired about own troops in the vicinity, there were none, so he ordered the Station Commander Jhelum to stand on the road and divert Commando Company who were to pass through and then he looked at me and ordered to have aircraft sweep the area.” The base was put on red alert that night, to search the area around the airfield especially the likely places considered as the suitable sites for rallying of enemy’s paratroopers.

A fighting patrol was pushed out under the command of Captain Irshad Gul (brigadier retired). He combed the suspected corners successfully but on return the patrol was fired upon by a jittery defender who had not become really proficient in the art of challenging and differentiation between friend and foe. Luckily the trigger-happy soldier was not a marksman and no one was hurt.

Subsequently Captain Shafaat and Captain Sheraz went in the L-19 to Chiniot area for the search of enemy paratroopers; they did not find any thing. Again on 9th September Major Sultan and Captain Sagheer flew in OH-13(S) No. 143 and 139 to search enemy paratroopers but returned in vain.

2 Army Aviation Squadron’s War Diary also records that “At 2230 hours on 8th September, an alarm was raised in the camp that some enemy paratroopers had been dropped near by. Captain Jamil, Muazam and Salim took few soldiers to find them out. The search was of no avail.”

At Sialkot 1 Army Aviation Squadron was also not immune from rumours, on the evening of 10th September, few civilians informed Headquarters 15 Division of seeing enemy tanks all around them, Squadron was put on general alert, second-in-command Major Nazir alerted the Squadron for possible move to Gujrat Strip, less one aircraft. Later, Major Nazir and Captain Askree flew around to find the truth, it was a false alarm. On 13th September driver Dost Mohammad of 1 Squadron was shot fatally by the own guard commander, it was dark and with rumours of enemy paratroopers still in the air, guard commander challenged him and on not receiving the proper pass word, fired. Dost Mohammad was buried with full military honours. He was the only war casualty of Army Aviation.

First Use of Two MI-4 Helicopters

The war ended on 23rd September 1965 but the demand for aviation effort increased further for reconnaissance and liaison missions. The quantum of troops in Kashmir during and after the 1965 War, was almost doubled, particularly the infantry battalions and artillery regiments. Previously only a thin line of infantry troops with scarce artillery support was deployed on the cease fire line before the commencement of the conflict. The rapidly advancing autumn/winter season made logistic support a nightmare for the commanders at all levels. Rations, ammunition for the troops and fodder for pack animals

was essential. The transportation of ration, ammunition and fodder through porter parties between the road heads and forward locations would only be a trickle. The logistic situation, particularly in Nelum, Jhelum Valleys, Bagh and Rawalakot Sectors was really desperate.

The story as narrated by brigadier retired Syed Mustanir Tirmizi, then a major, deserves to be told in his own words “While returning from a mission in Azad Kashmir in OH-13 helicopter, one late September evening, I spotted two junkish looking large helicopters parked on the strip at Dhamial Airfield. After switching off my helicopter, I walked over to these machines out of sheer curiosity. I had not seen such helicopters during my basic helicopter training in USA. In any case, our ally USA, had already put a ban on arms supply to Pakistan. I circled around the nearest helicopter. As compared to OH-13 it was a giant, a bit ugly looking and much rugged as compared to the American helicopters. On enquiring I was told that those were the Russian MI-4 helicopters belonging to Oil & Gas Development Corporation (OGDC) and had been requisitioned by the Army. It did not arouse any enthusiasm or excitement in me as a pilot. I was wondering whether those ugly birds could ever take off and fly. Next morning the indomitable Lieutenant Colonel NUK Babar, introduced us to Mr. Bashar and retired Flight Lieutenant Bokhari, the two Oil & Gas Development Corporation (OGDC) pilots along with their co-pilots. A draconian order was issued to us i.e. Majors A L Awan, S L A Bokhari, Muhammad Naeem and myself, to fly and get acquainted with the two MI-4 helicopters, by local flying in Dhamial circuit for two days and next two days to be spent for the area familiarization of Oil & Gas Development Corporation (OGDC) pilots in 1, 5 and 6 Sectors and as usual flight safety be damned. Army Aviation would not let down the men and animals located on the Line of Control. The actual logistic operations would start after four days. Such an order would have raised many eye brows under normal conditions but all of us were cognizant of the desperate logistic situation in AK where we were operating for the last couple of months.

Landing at Leepa Valley helipad was particularly a trying experience since it entailed spiraling down in tight cup shaped valley from ten thousand to seven thousand feet with trigger happy Indian infantry occupying the heights. The first trial landing was carried out very gingerly with thumping hearts. We, the squadron pilots, were in no position to control the helicopter, not being fully operational while sitting in the co-pilot seat. Our functions were confined to navigation and sweating only. All credit to Captains Bashar and Bokhari of Oil & Gas Development Corporation (OGDC), who completed this difficult transition with aplomb.”

“Needless to say, the mere appearance of two big helicopters was immensely morale boosting for the beleaguered troops. They were assured of their logistical sustenance during the next six winter months when road / porter operation would come to a halt due to snow. These two MI-4 helicopters provided the necessary logistic support admirably in four out of six AK Sectors. Bhimber and Kotli Sectors were relatively more accessible by existing road network. In addition, parachutes used to air drop supplies by the transport planes of the PAF and collected by the recipients, were also brought back for reuse from inaccessible areas.”

“Throughout the winter of 1965-66 we were busy like bees in logistic flight operations. Kel was to be supplied from Muzaffarabad, Leepa from Garhi Dopatta and Bagh, Rawalakot Sectors from Moong Bajri. As per the schedule worked out with Headquarters 12 Division, we would operate from Muzaffarabad, Garhi Dopatta and Moong Bajri, for ten to twelve days in rotation. By that time we had become fully operational on MI-4 helicopter. Hence

after a farewell dinner in the Army Aviation Officer's Mess, we relieved Basher and Bukhari and started independent operations with a skeleton Oil & Gas Development Corporation (OGDC) maintenance crew.” Full credit goes to Lieutenant Colonel Babar who in his own style caught the bull by the horn and his officers who zealously and devotedly tamed it and undertook many missions without any hesitation. Dumping operation was carried out from 30th October 1965 to February 1966 and following tonnage of ration and ammunition was lifted:-

Leepa	99 tons in 15 days
Kharsan Dhara	32 tons in 10 days
Dhok Panjal	25 tons in 15 days
Sheru ka Dhera	24 tons in 30 days
Kel	6 tons in 10 days
Kahuta Hajipir	8 tons in 4 days
Hajipir	2 tons in 2 days
Serai Hyderabad	6 tons in 6 days
Total	202 tons



Col Latif Awan



Brig Akram and Brig Trimzi



MI-4



MI-4 at Kel 1965

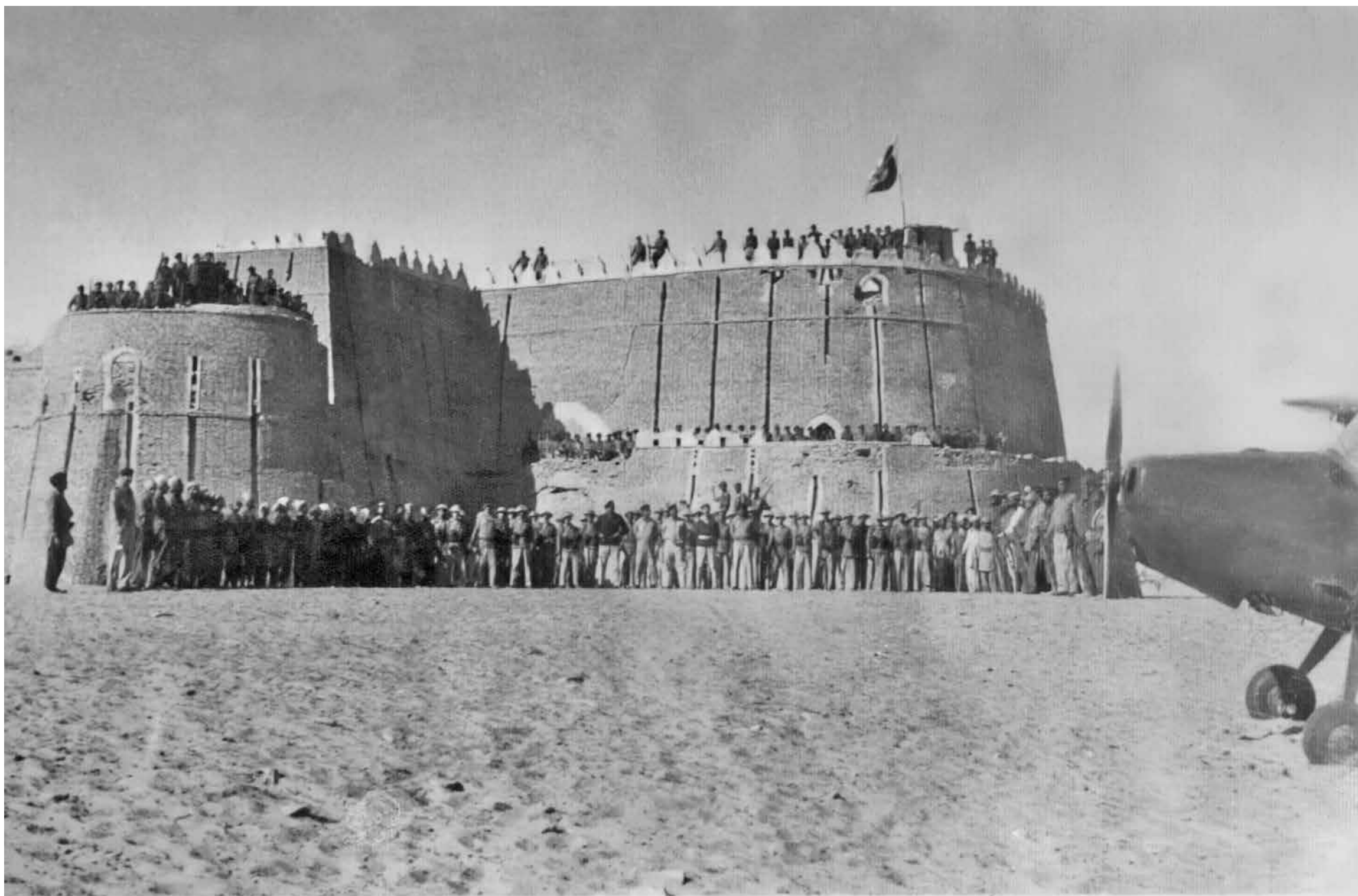
MI-4 Helicopter at Kashmir 1965



Major A.L. Awan



MI-4 Helicopter at Dhamial. 1965



Sadhewala Post - December 1965

When 1965 War ended, Pakistan was holding a sizeable chunk of Indian territory, in the southern desert Pakistan Army along with Rangers had Kishengarh Fort, Tanot, Longanewala, Ghutara and area right down to Shahgarh. In the line of posts from Islamgarh to Ghultara being held by own Rangers, there was one post Sadhewala being held by Indians. Movement of troops from Longanewala to Tanot and Kishengarh thus required long detours. That Indian post was getting reinforcement from Ramgarh.

L-19 Arrives in Sadhewala

On 20th October 1965 Captain Hamid Chaudhry and Captain Muazzam were ordered to fly from Gujranwala to Rahim Yar Khan and operate with the Rangers. They arrived there via Multan on the same day and reported to Headquarters Rangers. Rangers Force was commanded by Brigadier Khuda Dad. In the desert the ground movement was difficult and time consuming, therefore aerial reconnaissance proved to be very useful both in planning and execution phase of this operation. From 27th November 1965 onwards, Aviation effort was mainly diverted towards reconnaissance of Sadhewala. Officers of the rangers and infantry battalion which were to take part in the attack were flown. They include Major Tariq Rasul (father of Brigadier Arif Rasul), Brigadier Khuda Dad, Lieutenant Colonel Majid, Lieutenant Colonel Talib and Lieutenant Colonel Toni Mahmood. Desert features present different perspective early morning and changes with passage of day and position of sun. Pilots flew early morning and then late in the afternoon, they also helped rangers in making a sand model of the Sadhewala Post at their headquarters. D-Day was fixed on 2nd December 1965.

1st December 1965

Three reconnaissance sorties were flown in the area. Withdrawal route from Sadhewala led to Ramgarh via Morgich Ka Dera and Miraowala Tibba. The routes of the enemy as pointed by the Air OP were blocked by having blocking positions on the same night.



Aerial view of the Fort



Brig Hamid Choudhry 2005

D-Day 2nd December 1965

Captain Hamid Chaudhry writes: “A dawn attack was planned, I took off before first light. The flying time from Rahim Yar Khan to Sadhewala via Sandh was about 40 minutes. I was on target 20 minutes before the first light. As planned earlier, I started with an Artillery Shoot as part of pre H-hour bombardment.

Sadhewala Post was located in a large bowl of sand with high brims. Enemy was sitting on the high ground. By this time extensive flying had made me familiar with the area. Enemy was pinned down by own accurate artillery fire and own troops reached assaulting position. The moment own artillery fire was lifted the Indians were able to open heavy machine gun fire on our assaulting troops. I, from the air, guided the battalion of Lieutenant Colonel Toni to move behind the Sadhewala and reach the track, thus cutting off the withdrawal route. I had Lieutenant Colonel Majid with me in the L-19. Indians after some time, started withdrawing, I could see them running back on camels, foot and in the lone jeep. But they were nipped by the battalion of Colonel Toni Mahmood. By 1000 hours the post had been captured.

Later I landed in the bowl of Sadhewala. The whole post was littered with dead bodies. Indian Post commander, Lieutenant Paraveen Kumar was captured, he had thick eye glasses. When one of our soldier tried to blind fold him, Paraveen Kumar said, “ Just take the glasses off, without them, I am blind.” I saw a dead body of a Second Lieutenant with his steel helmet lying on his side, inside the helmet was the photograph of a beautiful smiling girl.”

Epilogue

The War of 1965 with India was the first challenge faced by the Pakistan Army, so was the case with air arm of the army. L-19 were already here for last over six years and pilots were pretty confident about their operational use. OH-13 helicopters, however, were a recent acquisition and their appearance on the battlefield was to a large extent a surprise for even own soldiers. The pilots were not very experienced but the whole force entered the war with excellent frame of mind. No body could have prepared the aviators better than it was done by the senior aviators of that time. A lot of credit goes to Colonel Awan, Lieutenat Colonels Jabbar, Salimullah, Karim, Mahmud, Babar, Mohammad Khan and Saeed Qadir.

Bravery Awards For Army Aviators

In all, during the War, four Sitara-i-Jur’at were awarded to the aviators for bravery in the air in addition to the one bagged by Lieutenant Colonel N.U.K Babar earlier in Chamb for rounding up a good number of Indian Infantry., Captain H.U.K Niazi of 1 Army Aviation Squadron, Major Rabbani, Major Akhtar and Captain Muazzam from 2 Army Aviation Squadron earned these honours. 3 Squadron alone flew 1249 sorties, flying 1348 hours and evacuating 145 casualties.



Lieutenant Colonel Naseer Ullah Babar

Lieutenant Colonel Naseer Ullah Babar, Commanding Officer 3 Army Aviation Squadron while flying an OH-13 with Captain A. L. Awan and Captain Akram in Chamb Sector during 1965 War spotted a deserted Indian post. On landing he found fully armed 55 Indian soldiers belonging to 5 Sikh Light Infantry Battalion. Lt Col Babar demonstrated excellent presence of mind and with his known boldness made the Indians surrender and led them marching to own divisional headquarters. In 1971 Brigadier Babar was 23 Division Artillery Commander and was decorated with SJ. In 1993 as a Federal Minister he was once again decorated, this time with Sitara-i-Shujaat for the bold action in dealing with a children bus hijacking in Islamabad. He thus becomes the highest decorated Army Aviator.



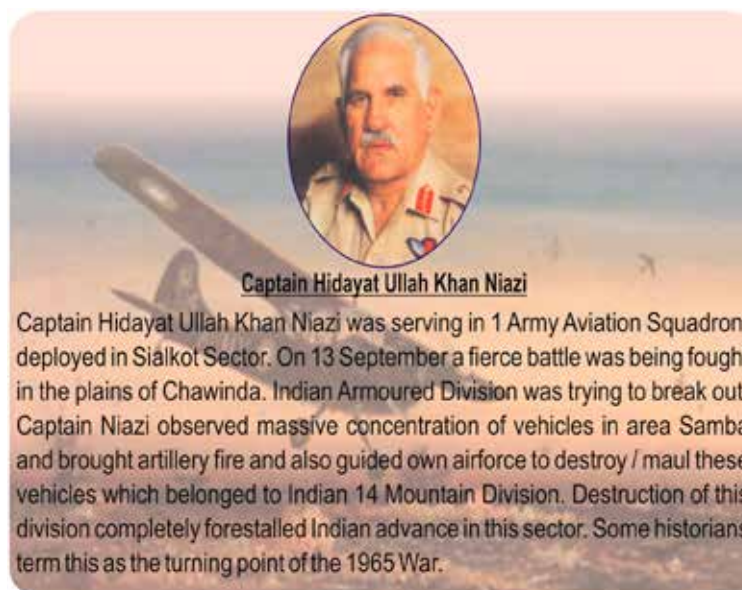
Major Sarfaraz Rabbani

Major Sarfaraz Rabbani of 2 Army Aviation Squadron was the flight commander and deployed with his L-19 flight in Chamb Sector. On 1 September 1965 during the Battle of Chamb, Indian artillery guns were hindering the advance of own forces. Major Rabbani was tasked of locate and silence these guns. He flew into the enemy area and successfully brought effective fire on to enemy guns. In spite of attracting heavy ground fire he kept flying in the enemy area till the guns were silenced. Indians fled leaving behind 14 Artillery guns a mile north of Chamb.



Captain Moazzam Ali Shah

Captain Moazzam Ali Shah of 2 Army Aviation Squadron was flying in Sialkot Sector during war in September 1965. On 18 September when critical battle ensued in this sector, Captain Moazzam was tasked to destroy hostile heavy artillery deployed deep in enemy area. He flew boldly close to the enemy guns inspite of heavy anti aircraft fire and managed to guide own fighter jets effectively on to enemy. The enemy guns were silenced for ever.



Captain Hidayat Ullah Khan Niazi

Captain Hidayat Ullah Khan Niazi was serving in 1 Army Aviation Squadron, deployed in Sialkot Sector. On 13 September a fierce battle was being fought in the plains of Chawinda. Indian Armoured Division was trying to break out. Captain Niazi observed massive concentration of vehicles in area Samba and brought artillery fire and also guided own airforce to destroy / maul these vehicles which belonged to Indian 14 Mountain Division. Destruction of this division completely forestalled Indian advance in this sector. Some historians term this as the turning point of the 1965 War.



Major Mohammad Akhtar

Major Mohammad Akhtar of 2 Army Aviation Squadron was flying in Pasrur Sector on 13 September 1965. Indians were attempting to break-out with infantry in this sector, inspite of Indian preponderance in fighter cover, Major Akhtar continued flying boldly and brought effective artillery fire on to the enemy which proved so successful that resulted in stalling the enemy advance. His courageous and timely action inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy.

3 Squadron 1967

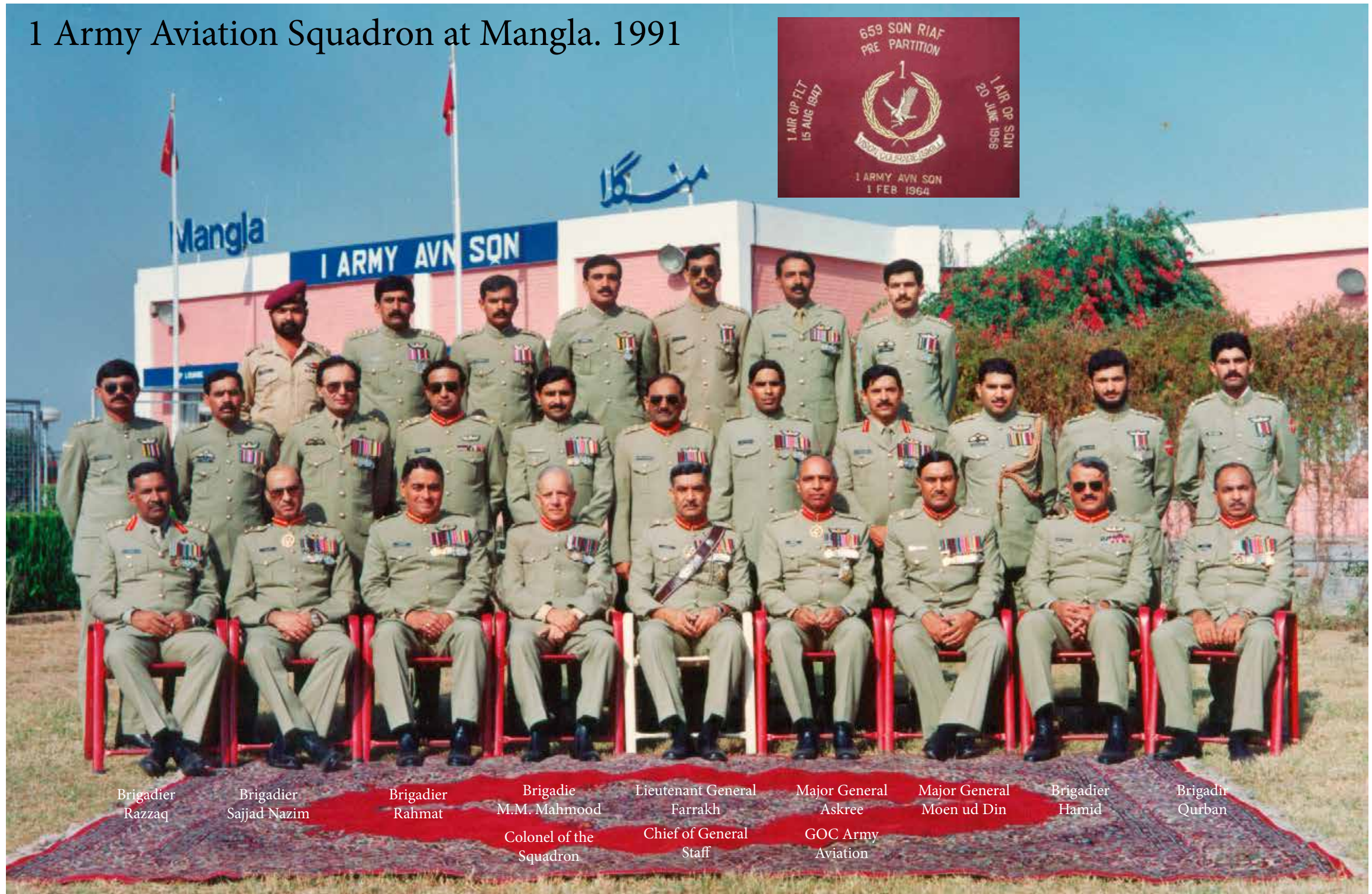
Major H.U.K. Niazi SJ

Capt Bajwa

Lt Col N Babar SJ

Maj Zafar Askree

1 Army Aviation Squadron at Mangla. 1991



Brigadier
Razzaq

Brigadier
Sajjad Nazim

Brigadier
Rahmat

Brigadier
M.M. Mahmood
Colonel of the
Squadron

Lieutenant General
Farrakh
Chief of General
Staff

Major General
Askree
GOC Army
Aviation

Major General
Moen ud Din

Brigadier
Hamid

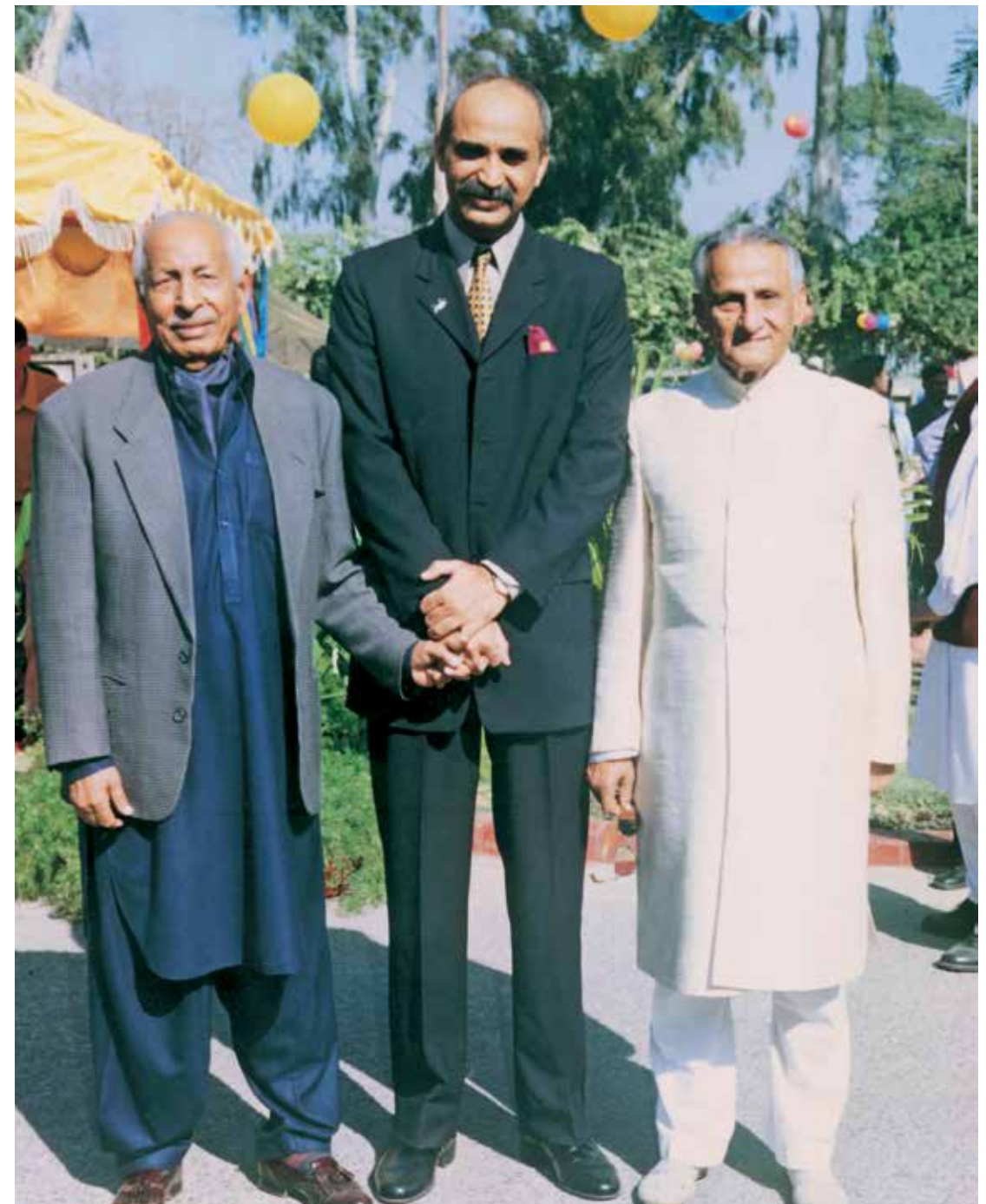
Brigadier
Qurban

End Note

This book is dedicated to all the officers and soldiers of Pakistan Army. The history of 1965 War was first compiled between 2001-2005 as part of history book namely Pakistan Army Aviation 1947-2007. Major General Muhammad Azam GOC Army Aviation (2001-2004) took keen interest in its compilation and publishing. On the 60th anniversary of the War, as a tribute the account is being published with additional write up and pictures. Gratitude is due to the current GOC Major General Saeed Niazi for his patronisation and keen interest. Brigadier (Retd) Mian Mahmud and Lt Gen (Retd) Saeed Qadir are the only living commanding officers of 1965 War. Brigadier (Retd) Mian Mahmud is from first PMA Long Course. He has written an elaborate account of the Sialkot Sector during 1965 War. Late Maj Manzur Bajwa and Maj Sagheer also contributed through written account and some rare war pictures. All paintings less two (L-19 and OH 13S) were commissioned by Group Captain (Retd) Hussaini of PAF and are present in Army Aviation Officers Mess Rawalpindi and AIMH.



Brigadier (Retd) Riaz 1965 War veteran with Major General Azam GOC Army Aviation. 2003



Brigadier (Retd) Jabbar, Base Commander Dhamial 1965 War, Major Aamir Cheema, Brigadier (Retd) M.M. Karim Aviation School Commandant 1965 War Eid Day at Aviation Officers Mess Rawalpindi. 2003